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THE ETERNAL

OR THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS

BY ROBERT PHILIP D.D.

THE ETERNAL;

OR,

"The God of Our Fathers,"

AS REVEALED IN

HIS WORD AND WORKS.

By ROBERT PHILIP, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF "THE EXPERIMENTAL GUIDES," ETC., ETC.

New and Revised Edition.

"The world by wisdom knew not God."

"This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

London:

JAMES CLARKE & CO., 13, FLEET STREET.

1874.

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INTRODUCTION.

In this age of culture and refinement, when sceptical men of science are seeking to ignore the existence of "The Eternal God," as revealed in His own Word, and practically to exclude the Creator from the control of His own universe, some may be disposed to question the wisdom of reproducing a book which is confessedly founded upon, and replete with, the old-fashioned Puritan theology; more especially as we are so confidently assured that these dogmas are now completely exploded, and "having decayed and waxed old, are ready to vanish away."

In the belief, however, that a reaction will take place before long in the opposite direction, and that the thirst of the human soul for "the living God" will demand for its satisfaction something more than the "sweetness and light" which our modern philosophers can supply, this volume is republished, with the earnest desire that it may contribute in some humble degree to that important result. Miss Nightingale, in a remarkable article published in *Fraser's Magazine*, for May, 1873, makes the following

observations: "Is it not the most important, and at the same time the most neglected, point in theology, to determine, What God is? What His character is like? Reams of sermons are written on every point but *this*, and yet *this* is the foundation of all."

As an honest attempt to answer such questions, this work, it is hoped, will commend itself to earnest seekers after truth. It proceeds upon the assumption that a Divine revelation is both an indispensable necessity, and an accomplished fact—a view which, to say the least, did not appear unphilosophical to a heathen sage, whom the world has universally accepted as one of its greatest teachers. Witness the sublime language which Plato has put into the lips of one of the disciples of Socrates:—"Amidst the variety of human reasonings, we ought to adopt those opinions which seem the best supported, and to trust to them as to a ship, while we sail through the stormy sea of life, till we find out some surer and some more seaworthy vessel, in which we may make this perilous and tempestuous voyage in confidence and safety. Such a vessel would be some Divine promise or revelation."

The allegory, entitled, "The Pharos of the Nile," was originally published in one of the author's earlier volumes, which has been for many years out of print. It is here inserted as an appropriate introduction to an argument, which seeks to define the proper relative position of Revelation and Science.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

HAVING from my youth up felt the sweet charm of the patriarchal words, "God of my Fathers," and knowing well what endeared God to our pious ancestors, I dare not remain silent, now that sciolists and mystics are trying to refine away all that our fathers revered and loved in the Divine character. Our general literature is not of a kind to raise up readers to either CHARNOCK or BATES, amongst young Christians. I have, therefore, endeavoured to give both a text and a tone to the youthful mind, by surrounding my own simple ideas of God with sublime hints selected from great thinkers; in order that it may be seen at a glance, that neither the intellect nor the taste of our fathers was weak in preferring the Bible to nature, faith to philosophy, and the Reformers and Puritans to patristic saints and neological mystics.

I deliberately placed myself in this position, that the young might read, as I wrote, in the presence of a "great cloud of witnesses," whose *mighty* intellect no sceptic can doubt. My mottos will also apprise the young, who may not have access to many old books, of what is to be found

in the ancients; and thus, some may be weaned from *light* reading and led to acquaint themselves with the writers who made our fathers PURITANS.

Another motive which influenced me, was, the hope that this volume would help Christian parents and Sunday-school teachers to simplify theological forms of speaking about the Divine perfections; and to commend them to their children, now that folios are not favourites.

ROBERT PHILIP.

January 1, 1846.

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THE PHAROS OF THE NILE;

OR,

THE WISDOM OF EGYPT, CONTRASTED WITH THE ORACLES OF GOD.

AN EASTERN ALLEGORY.

HILLEL the holy sat in the chair of Moses, and at his feet, with the sons of the prophets, sat his only son, listening to the oracles of God. But Amram, whilst he seemed attentive to the parental lesson, was planning to forsake his father's house, and his father's God.

He had heard of "the wisdom of Egypt," and longed to decipher its mysteries, by tracing its hieroglyphic monuments. He knew that Moses was "learned in all the wisdom of Egypt," and had grown up to manhood amidst its pyramids and temples; and he suspected that the Hebrew lawgiver had learned more from the Egyytian priests, than it was convenient to acknowledge. Their science he thought, would unravel the mystery of the Mosaic miracles, and their ritual furnish the antetypes of Judean worship. Amram disliked both the system and the ceremonies of Judaism; and, but for the miracles which attested it, and which he knew not how to disprove, he would have embraced at once the philosophy of Dedan and Deman. His own mind was powerful, and he imagined that the mighty intellect of Moses had seized upon, and *systematised, the* occult principles of Egyptian

wisdom, as the basis of the Jewish theocracy. Amram was ambitious, and he imagined that if he could prove Moses a copyist, and thus disprove his inspiration, he might become the founder of a new religion, or at least divide the palm of immortality with the sages and hierophants of antiquity. As "a Hebrew of the Hebrews," he saw nothing before him but mediocrity of name and rank. He disdained to flow like Jordan in one uniform channel; because, like Jordan, he must be lost in the Dead Sea of oblivion. Any rank that he could acquire in the Temple or the Sanhedrim, was not enough to gratify his ambition, nor to perpetuate his own name. Judaism! it was a system which he might not lawfully alter or question, which admitted of no human improvements, and resented all human interference; which recognised no moral distinction between genius and common-place minds, and gave no liberty to the Rabbi, which it withheld from the shepherd. Amram could not brook this. The eagle of Tadmor, he said, "was not made to be domesticated like the stork of the desert, nor to be cooped up like the doves of Heshbon; the width of his wings, and the flashing of his eye, proclaim that space is his sphere, and the fountain of light his element."

In this haughty spirit, Amram fled to Tyre, and embarked for Egypt. He could not, however, banish from his heart all the recollections of home. They awoke and sprung up at the touch of the most unlikely causes. All that was new in the scene and the society on board recalled all that was old and familiar at home.

A libation, or a hymn, to the God of the Winds, or of the Waters, compelled Amram to remember "the Songs of *Zion,*" *and* "*the* drink offerings" of the Temple. A gar-

land could not be thrown into the waves, nor a censer of incense burnt in the ship, without reminding him of the Feast of Tabernacles, and the higher solemnities of the great Day of Atonement. And while he listened to the captain as he thundered out his absolute orders to the helmsman and the sailors, Amram felt that orders might be arbitrary without being unnecessary, and unintelligible to him, without being unreasonable in themselves. This conviction was setting calmly in upon his mind, whilst wind and tide were in favour of the vessel; and it came in like a flood upon his soul, when the wind changed and rose to a hurricane. Then, strange orders multiplied, and sterner tones were employed by the captain. But they met the emergency; the vessel kept her path in the waters, and Amram felt that the captain was the best judge. He was thus drawn to confess to himself that the vessel of the Jewish Commonwealth might require laws and ordinances, which, though incomprehensible to him, were essential to her safety, in a world wholly given to idolatry. He almost repented of his experiment; misgivings of heart thronged in upon his spirit. But it was too late to retract. The tempest raged, "and darkness was on the face of the deep." Amram felt then that it was not by science that Moses divided the Red Sea; and instinctively exclaimed—"The waters saw Thee, O God! the waters saw Thee, and were afraid. At Thy rebuke they fled."

But, at this moment, the Pharos of the Nile shone out in all its splendour, and, with its light, arose again all the visions of Amram. "It was," he said, "to the ship, what Egypt was to the world, the pole-star to steer by. It was Egyptian light that flamed over Judea, and flashed far out upon the three *continents*." Whilst indulging this dream,

the vessel was bearing up to the port, along a line of light which streamed from the beacon. But the light which thus divided the darkness, could not penetrate the waters. It flashed upon their surface, but did not reveal their secrets. The ship struck upon a sank-bank, and could not be got off. Rafts were then the only refuge. On one of these Amram pushed off with a single oar. He brought it close upon the line of light, and impiously said that "the Pharos was his pillar of fire." Gradually, however, the line of light became shorter and fainter as he came nearer to the port. The beacon could not illuminate its own base. Its splendours flashed far out upon the distant waves, but left the breakers around it in deepened darkness. Amram felt then that the Pharos was not the pillar of fire. "May it not be after all," he said, "but too true an emblem of the wisdom of Egypt, which may shine fair afar off whilst 'the shadow of death' is around the Egyptians themselves? How many things occur to shake my confidence! I must not be too rash. If I escape I will judge impartially. But I will judge for myself at all hazards." Thus he reasoned and resolved, whilst striving in vain to catch a glimpse of the landing-place. The Pharos threw no light upon it. The God of his fathers did not, however, forsake Amram, although Amram had forsaken Him.

His cries for help rose unpitied or unheard under the beacon, but they entered the ear of the God of Israel. "He sent from above, and drew him out of many waters." This signal deliverance silenced for a time his doubts of a special Providence. He pondered over it until he was almost pleased with the doctrine as it bore upon himself. *There* seemed a sublimity in the idea that an invisible

hand guarded him! Might he not appeal to the fact in attestation of whatever system of religion he chose to put forward? What was the escape of Moses from the reeds of the Nile, compared with his rescue from its dark and stormy waters? But, what, too, was one miracle in his favour, compared with the host of miracles which accredited the mission of Moses? Amram saw this at a glance, and felt too, that if he admitted a special Providence in his own case, he could not deem Moses unworthy of similar honour; and thus the axe would be laid at once to the root of his objections against Judaism. For, if providences could prove the divinity of a system, that of Moses was demonstrated.

Amram, therefore, forced himself back amongst his old doubts and cavils upon the doctrine of Providence. He could not however, shake off the suspicion, that the Pharos was an emblem of the wisdom of Egypt—not, indeed, intended to be so—but truly so. The idea took hold of him at the very crisis of his danger, and it continued to haunt him wherever he went. Whether he saw the people kneeling before their colossal idols, or the priests ministering at their emblazoned altars, both seemed to him—under the Pharos!

The devotion of the former, and the mysterious deportment of the latter, would tell well in song or story, at a distance; and might even suggest high thoughts in a foreign land, as the Pharos could guide distant vessels; but where Ammon and the Ibis, Isis and Anubis, were alternately worshipped, the devotées are truly under the Pharos! Whatever the system may seem or suggest to those who are afar off, it can only render the darkness visible to those who *are nearest*.

Amram was too keen a discerner of facts to overlook this; neither the antiquity nor the mystery, the splendour nor the power of the system, could blind him to its absurdities. He had no love, and but little veneration for Judaism; but he loathed mean ideas, whether embodied in miniature or colossal forms. A hawk-headed idol was to him a caricature of omniscience, and a ram-headed idol a parody of omnipotence. Idols in every form awoke his indignation, and made him blush for man. He blushed for himself too at this moment; for the gods of Egypt, by disgusting him, had compelled him to fall back on the revelation of the true God. "By what, but inspiration," he exclaimed, "could Moses have conceived and embodied the character of Jehovah? There is nothing in these statues to suggest a feature of it. There is everything in them to chain down the mind amongst the senses. Brute force is the character of all their strength, and passion of all their beauty. What is vast conveys no idea of infinity; what is durable, no idea of eternity. Nothing is incomprehensible, except what is not worth comprehending. Even Jupiter Ammon was chiselled under the Pharos!" Amram turned from the idols to the altars of Egypt. There the sacrifices were numerous, and the process of immolation solemn. For a moment he seemed in the temple of his fathers. Blood flowed with equal profusion, and victims blazed with equal splendour. But here, the hecatomb terminated in *itself*. It looked back to no Divine origin, nor forward to any Divine end. Sacrifice was a shadow without a substance. Priests offered it with solemnity; but no prophet stood by to interpret it. It shadowed forth no coming Saviour, nor *any real atonement*. Amram felt all this; and confessed

to himself that whatever mystery hung over the Mosaic sacrifices, they did not terminate in themselves, but all anticipated "good things to come." They were to him the problems of Judaism; but in Judaism alone he found a rational origin, or a useful design for sacrifice. As the type of a real atonement, its flames irradiated the past and the future with mysterious glory.

From the altars of Egypt, Amram turned to its tombs. He was still anxious to detect or degrade Moses in something; and here man seemed destined for immortality! The embalming of the dead, and the embellishment of their sepulchres, threw all the sepulture of Judea into the shade. "Were not the Pyramids and the Catacombs of Memphis bold and brilliant assertions of a glorious immortality? Were they not the storehouses of the resurrection? Judaism whispered the hope of immortality; but here, was it not *thundered* through all the caverns of the grave?" Under this impression, Amram proceeded to examine them.

He found however, at every step, that whatever Egyptian sepulture implied for man, it implied for beasts and reptiles. They too, reposed in all the enshrinements of mortality. Kings and crickets were equally embalmed, and entombed. Amram felt as under the Pharos again! In vain did the priests tell him of Amenthes, the Hades of the Egyptians. The return of souls to reanimate their bodies was blended with the immortality of the Ibis and Ichneumon, and regulated by no law, nor related to any specific time. Then the translation of Enoch and the ascension of Elijah to heaven came upon Amram with a glory unseen formerly. They shone out like the sun and the moon upon the Mosaic doctrine of

immortality, and showed at a glance that Judaism was based upon the hope of eternal life, and dim only by the splendours of its theocratic Providence.

Amram had now seen enough of Egypt. He said, "I will arise and go to my father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came to his father." Hillel the holy saw at once that his son was as weary of Egyptian wisdom, as the tribes were of Egyptian bondage. He therefore welcomed him under the wings of the cherubim again; and from the chair of Moses, magnified the God of Israel, who had, with a mighty hand, and an outstretched arm, "brought his son out of Egypt."

THE ETERNAL;

OR,

THE ATTRIBUTES OF "THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS."

CHAPTER I.

THE PERFECTION OF SCRIPTURE, AS THE REVELATION OF THE DIVINE CHARACTER AND GOVERNMENT.

"I have seen an end of all perfection: but Thy law is exceeding broad."—DAVID.

"Of all perfection in this world, whether of wit, learning, pleasure, honour, or riches, experience will soon show us 'the end.' But where is the end or boundary of the Word of God? Who can ascend to the height of its excellence? Who can fathom the depth of its mysteries? Who can find out the comprehension of its precepts or conceive the extent of its promises? Who can take the dimensions of that LOVE of God to man, which it describeth; or of that love of man to God, which it teacheth? The knowledge of one thing leadeth us forward to that of another; and still, as we travel on, the prospect opens before us into eternity, like the fruitful mountains of Canaan, rising on the other side of Jordan, when viewed by Moses from the top of Pisgah."—DR. HORNE.

"The first lesson to be impressed on every man is, that a revelation hath come down to him from the Almighty Author of his being. Now, though the Scriptures at present bear not the outward pomp of such high authority, yet are they not merely speculative, but are connected with awful events before us in time and eternity: and their dictate is equally solemn, as if each day they were let down from heaven by the hand of the Lord, and their lines traced before every man's eyes by a finger of fire."—AIRD'S CHARACTERISTICS.

AND were the Bible thus visibly and splendidly "let down from heaven every day by the hand of the Lord," who would not read it with holy awe and high expectation? Did it even come forth in the firmament, "clear as the sun," or "fair as the moon;" or did its several truths rise

and set as regularly as the stars, now one by one, and anon in clusters and constellations, but all bright and intelligible, who could avoid reading? Now, however this may be, the Bible in your own hand, or lying simply open upon your table, is far more useful, as to both its form and place, than if every star bore an inscription from its precepts, and the moon enshrined all its promises, and the sun embodied and emblazoned the glorious Gospel; and thus, than if every orb were an oracle. For that little book claims to tell and explain more by words concerning God and eternity, than all the united voices of universal nature. It claims to be the only interpreter of every trace of "the eternal power and Godhead" that creation bears, whether creation be taken as the eye can see it, or as the mind can comprehend it. The Bible has nothing to fear, of either eclipse or cloud, from the magnificence of visible nature, nor from the more gorgeous glories which science unveils in the unfathomable depths of space. Accordingly, it has nothing *more*, and nothing *less* to say about God to the NEWTONS of astronomy, before whom the universe expands with equal infinity and effulgence, than to the beggar or the slave. Its great theme is, that "GOD IS LOVE;" and it utters that truth with a calm majesty, which implies that nothing higher could be seen or said of God in any world of the universe, "the heaven of heavens" itself not excepted. This, indeed, is the most desirable truth for all worlds, however many or wonderful they may be. They know nothing sublimer or sweeter than that God is love. They *can* know nothing better than this fact; for, were it not true, they could have no security against either want, woe, or even annihilation. No message or manifestation, therefore, better than this, has ever gone, or can go out from the eternal throne

to any quarter of the universe, be its inhabitants, hierarchies, or circumstances what they may; and thus we are absolutely sure that our own world has—and that in a *peculiar* form—the very best view of the Divine character which the Divine nature can give, as well as the best that any world possesses. No one can doubt the truth of this who understands what love is; for God can be, do, feel nothing higher than love. The eternal mind itself cannot go beyond "perfect love," even when all its powers centre in its warmest and wisest emotions.

> "Love is the brightest of the train,
> And sweetens all the rest!"

This assertion is not made, only or chiefly, because we should have nothing to hope, were God not love. This is true; but it is equally true, that, were He not so, there would be neither moral nor natural certainty that any creature, however pure or lovely, could retain a place in His heart for ever. But "He will *rest* in His love," says Zephaniah. God may not "rest from His present works" as a Creator, nor confine Himself to the present scale of creation. Beings and things, as they now are in point of number and greatness, may be only specimens, or "first fruits," of His skill; and the universe, as it is, only such a *nucleus* for future worlds, as Eden was to the subsequent population of the earth;—a mere *germ* of the vast society that shall eventually people space, and share the attentions of Jehovah. But, whatever the universe may become, or however new worlds may yet throw the *old* into the shade by superior bulk, brilliancy, and even intellect, nothing can throw the *present* creation out of His notice, or displace it in His complacency; for "God is love," and thus will "rest in His love" to all that now

depend on it, however space may yet sparkle with new creations, or ring with new anthems, or teem with new wonders.

This is one reason for believing the Bible to be, not only a revelation *from* God, but also a revelation *of* God; for, whilst it leaves the conviction that neither His power nor wisdom can ever be exhausted, however long or far creation may go on,

"Whilst immortality endures,"

it defies us to imagine that even He Himself can ever breathe a finer spirit than "Love." This single fact is demonstration of its Divine origin. The oracle, "God is love," whilst it is equally intelligible to the child and the sage, is a truth that neither, nor any one, can wish *untrue*, nor start an objection against; and that must have similar attractions everywhere, and for ever, to all who care anything about God. All worlds may be challenged and defied to find fault with it, or to find out anything better for them. The united intellect of the universe, if all upon the *stretch* to judge what would most brighten time or bless eternity, could reach no other conclusion, even if they pondered for ages, than just that the Bible had said all that can be said or conceived, namely, that "God is love."

You will *feel* that this is nothing but sober fact, if you only suppose for a moment, that God were *not* love. Why, a cold *chill* comes over the spirit at once, when it glances at the bare idea of a *loveless* God. We feel, instinctively, that by no effort could we love such a being, whatever might be the consequences. We feel, too, that this would be felt in all worlds, and that it would be in vain to tell them or us to take pleasure, or place confidence, in a God

without love. True, indeed, many take no pleasure in the fact, that God is love. His wisdom or power, as displayed in creation, or His goodness in providence, are far more attractive to them than His love. But, were He *not* love, in any sense, a change as well as a chill would soon come over their spirit. They are calm and cold, because they take for granted that God is love in some sense: but they would shake with terror did they not think so. Thus, they too, however little they care about His love in redemption, would confess that a loveless God would alarm them. Thus, also, the very *ease* of the public mind, or its freedom from *dark* suspicions about the heart of God, proves, when closely examined, that the heart of man takes refuge from fear in some form or fragment of the great Scriptural truth, that God is love. In the case of the generality, indeed, there is nothing very sweet or bright in their ideas of the Divine benevolence. They know little, and think less, about "the loving kindness of the Lord." But still it is what they do know or think of God, as good, or merciful, or kind, in some way, that keeps them from despair and gives them composure. For, were He *unmerciful*, they would go mad, or plunge into atheism at once, in order to escape from anguish. Thus, the very pillow upon which the conscience of the ungodly reposes in ease, or in apathy, or in stupor, is formed of leaves from "the tree of life," however the ungodly themselves may overlook the fact, or be unconscious of ever having gathered a leaf from that tree. For, on earth, that tree is the Word of God; and so many do climb it, in search of ripe fruit and healing leaves, that there is a portion of its leaves for ever falling, and for ever wafted into the abodes of even those who never read the Bible.

No one can altogether escape *hearing* something about the God of the Bible, however they may eschew both His oracles and ordinances; and all, unless they turn atheists, take up with some shape or shadow of the very hope that a Christian cherishes. It is, therefore, *weak*, as well as wicked, to entertain any doubt or suspicion of either the truth or perfection of revelation; for, its grand truth, the love of God to man, is caught at, and kept, in some form, by all who believe in a God.

Weigh this fact. The spirit in which the generality hope in the goodness and mercy of God is, indeed, thoroughly unscriptural; and their reasons for giving God credit for either tenderness or lenity are almost uninfluenced by the cross or the Gospel. But still, dim and cold as are the prevalent or popular notions of God, as love, they all centre in the Scriptural fact that He *is* love; although they fly off from, or never come near to, the revealed *reasons* of it. Well, therefore, may we believe both the truth and perfection of Scripture, seeing its grand point, or that upon which everything depends, the love of God, is, in some form, the grand point in every man's creed who believes anything at all about God.

Thus the whole world stands around the Church, denying, indeed, or overlooking her grand reasons for believing the love of God; but, owning, yea, insisting upon the truth of His being love, and of His being so in a sense that can pardon and save them. Were I, therefore, at all inclined to turn infidel, or to entertain doubts about the Gospel—which certainly I am not—I see no camp, but that of atheists, where I should be welcome. Deists would disown me were I to throw doubts upon the perfect benevolence of God; and the wicked would not thank me, but

even spurn me, were I to deny His mercy. I should be hissed down in a theatre, and hooted out of a ball-room, and black-balled by any club, were I to maintain that God is unmerciful; so generally and deeply has the conviction that God is anything but unmerciful lodged itself in the human mind, even where that mind is most ungodly. I cannot think it either a hard or an unreasonable matter, therefore, that I am bound to believe the Gospel as it stands in the Bible; for, go where I will, I must believe something *like* the love that the Gospel ascribes to God, unless I turn atheist; and then, too, I should shock all but atheists. Thus, all but those who deny a God, demand of me, as a condition of their fellowship, that whatever else I disbelieve about Him, I must believe that He is sufficiently and certainly love, to be even very merciful.

Thus the matter really stands, when it is stripped of verbiage and vague phrases. Then, in what a *humiliating* light it places both unbelief and doubting? If you feel *afraid* to believe that God can love you, or have mercy upon you, you are allowing a fear that the world, as well as the Church, would wonder at and condemn as utterly groundless. The worst of mankind, as well as the best, would upbraid your slowness of heart to believe, and hope in mercy. The world and the Church would, indeed, urge you to hope by very different *reasons;* but still, both would try to shut you up to one practical point—namely, that there is no real reason for despair in your case. If, however, on the other hand, you can hope without believing the Gospel, or just because you take for granted that God is merciful, do remember, that however you may have picked up *that opinion* of His mercy, it is a fragment of

the Rock of Ages, or a leaf from the Tree of life, that some one struck off, in the first instance, for quite another purpose than you hold it—namely, in order to win attention to that Rock, and to that tree, themselves. "That Rock is Christ," and that tree the Gospel; and, but for them, you would never have had the opinion of God that you now entertain. It is, therefore, *unworthy* of both your sense and honesty to hope in God, if you care nothing, or but little, about the revealed *foundation* of hope. This is like pilfering money from a father's pocket, or from a master's till, under the pretence that they can well spare it, or will never miss it. You would not think yourself welcome to stolen money because it was sterling, nor could you expect a blessing with it. This is, indeed, a homely illustration, but it is a true one, of both the impudence of Unitarianism, and the apathy of formalism, when they compliment Divine mercy at the expense of the cross; thus stealing the "*emerald*" from the mediatorial breastplate, to gem their own hopes, whilst despising or neglecting both the "High Priest" and His sacrifice.

The design of these hints is, to bring into broad daylight the real claims of your Bible upon your attention and confidence, as the only mirror of the Divine character, will, or government, in reference to eternity. For although the entire universe reflects the eternal power and Godhead, as calm seas reflect the heavens, or lakes the mountains, it proves nothing concerning salvation, until all its glories are illuminated by "the Sun of Righteousness." This fact I have illustrated in many forms in the following pages; but, whilst it is upon the surface of them all, there is also a *ground-stream* running underneath, that *influenced* all my forms of thought and tones of feeling. I

refer to the less obvious fact, that it is absolutely impossible, by any effort, to conceive of anything that would at all dignify or endear God, *beyond* the light in which the Scriptures place Him. It is no assumption to assert this. I am not putting myself, nor calling you forward, as capable of even guessing, much less of determining, how far genius, wisdom, or learning may yet go, in both heightening and hallowing all the noblest conceptions that even the noblest minds now have of God. Indeed, I see no *limits*, in either time or eternity, to the progress of both loftier and lovelier views of Jehovah, from REDEMPTION, than any that now awe the sage, or enrapture the saint, or inspire the seraph. I even calculate upon light being struck out from the Bible, as time goes on, and thus gets nearer to eternity, that will as much eclipse the brilliancy of our best writers, as they now

"Pale the stars of Greece,"

whether Platonic or patristic. But whilst I readily allow, and fondly anticipate all this, as more than probable, I feel also more than justified in both believing and asserting that the Gospel will never be eclipsed, nor the sacred writers thrown into the shade, nor even a single really *new* idea of God added, whatever giants of intellect or devotion may yet arise to bless the Church, or to astonish the world.

We have, remember, the experience of eighteen centuries now to illustrate and confirm this assertion; but, during their lapse, not *one* idea of God, sweeter or sublimer than those which render the Gospel glorious, has ever been struck out by either the enemies or the friends of the Gospel. Its friends, indeed, have not tried to surpass or improve it; but its *enemies* have, all along, been striving

to eclipse it, and to get up views of God that should supersede it by either their grandeur or beauty—but, all in vain. At this moment there is not one deistical, scientific, or mystic idea of God, whatever be its sublimity or gentleness, that will bear to be compared with His own account of Himself. And, as to both the loftiest and loveliest representations of the Divine character, which either our greatest theologians or our best poets have ever produced, they have been meekly laid down at the feet of the Gospel, as humble tributes to its unspeakable glory, as the *unveiler* of Deity. Milton felt that his harp had too few strings, to reach the music of the "new song." Newton was glad to come down from the loftiest distances of the universe, to study his Bible, although he had seen millions of radiant worlds blazing with the visible glory of God, as if infinity were one vast Shekinah around the eternal throne. The mighty and melodious spirit of Jeremy Taylor, after soaring as an eagle amongst "The Miracles of Divine Mercy," sank down like his own tossed "Lark," panting and overpowered; acknowledging that he needed such candour for himself, as Peter, when "not knowing what he said," after witnessing the transfiguration on the holy mount. So also, "the silver-tongued Bates," after reviewing his eloquent treatise "On the Harmony of the Divine Attributes in Redemption," said of his subject, "Our most raised thoughts are infinitely beneath its dignity. Human words are but the *echo* of the voice of God." And the great Charnock did not venture to write a preface for his immortal work on the Attributes, because he could not find words to express his deep sense of his own weakness.

It is on such grounds that I commend the Word of God,

as a revelation of God, that towers, like Lebanon over Carmel and Bashan, far above all other views of His character that ever the greatest minds produced, even when they were almost inspired by the devotional study of the Scriptures. Now this is "*a great fact*" that should be often remembered; for it is both weak and wrong to look at the Bible as if it left room to wish that God were *kinder* than it represents Him. He is love; and nothing is, or can be, kinder than that. We *drivel*, as well as dream, when we allow ourselves to think that it would be either better or safer for us, were God less *strict* in forbidding and denouncing sin; for no man would like an *eternity* of any sinful pleasure. An eternity of any of the vices or vanities of our nature is a *shocking* idea to ourselves the moment we reflect on it. And no wonder!

Now here another "great fact" comes out, in proof of the truth and perfection of Scripture. It regards sin now, just as sin will be viewed for ever by sinners themselves. And you see at a glance how that will be; for sin consists in either opposing or neglecting the will of God. But the sinner lives not, who would wish to oppose or to neglect God through eternity, or even for a single day after death. In reference to the *next* world, no man has a wish to be at liberty to do wrong. Thus it is, that however men may argue now in favour of sinful pleasure, or against holy restraint, they dare not run their reasonings into eternity, nor even beyond the grave. Although, therefore, they overlook the fact, it is the fact, that the Bible *begins* with forbidding and condemning sin, just as they will *end* their present excuses and palliations of it. Thus we have again, in the Bible, another principle that can never be overthrown or fairly evaded. No ingenuity can ever work out an argu-

ment in favour of ETERNAL vice or folly, that any sane mind would welcome or yield to. Indeed, even in this world, there are times when the votaries of it are such *victims* to it, in either mind or body, that they feel, if not confess, as if hell could begin on earth; "the way of transgressors is so hard." Thus, although the ingenuity of every age has had for its chief object to *disprove* what God has said against "the lusts of both the flesh and the mind," not one of His warnings has been falsified or shaken. All manner of scorn and scepticism has assailed them, and every stratagem tried to separate suffering from sin, but in vain. Bitter experience verifies Scripture, in spite of all the blandishments that the fine arts throw around vice, and in defiance of all that poetry has sung about pleasure, or science done to alleviate pain. The Divine law, like the mount where it was given, stands unmoved amidst all the storms that have raged against it. Indeed, like rocks in cataracts, it has taken new forms of majesty from the very rushing of torrents of enmity. For its simple interdict, "*Thou shalt not*," is now re-echoed by graves or groans, that outspeak both the thunder and the trumpet of Sinai. Well might David say, "I have seen an *end* of all perfection; but Thy law is exceeding broad!"

This oracle is equally true in reference to all human theories of *mental* happiness. Not one of them has either disproved or improved the Divine maxim, that the favour of God "is life, and His lovingkindness better than life." Mystics have tried to find bliss in dreamy visions, and poets in sublime raptures, and philosophers in deep speculations, and Ritualists in solemn ceremonies in reference to God and heaven; but all in vain so far as either perfect or *permanent peace* of mind is concerned. They have found

moments of both awe and ecstasy, whilst their imagination kept on the wing, and no heavy care chafed or depressed their spirits. But as to that holy calm, which springs from "a good hope through grace," and leans upon the cross as humbly as angelic joy leans upon the throne, it has never been found, as an *abiding* guest, by any one who has not sought for it in the Word of God by prayer. A *child-like* faith in the Gospel, as presenting the brightness of God's paternal glory "in the face of Jesus," has, however, never failed to give "peace in believing," even when worldly cares were weighty, and bodily weakness great, and the natural spirits anything but good—a result never realised by either theorists or sentimentalists. No, nor by *compromisers* in the service of God. Thousands have tried the *wild* experiment of "serving two masters," and have thus been utter strangers to happiness from religion; for a good hope will not live in a *bad* conscience, nor occasional *fits* of piety keep the heart right with God: whereas, a simple-hearted endeavour, without bustle or irregularity, to *please* God, never fails to bring peace.

It will confirm your faith in this general principle to remember, as well as observe, that no theory or experiment on domestic happiness has ever *improved* upon the Scriptural rules laid down for husbands and wives, parents and children. Conjugal love has often been very ingenious, and willing, too, to shield and enshrine itself from "the tear and wear" of time, and from the caprices of temper, and from the vicissitudes of circumstances; but no results have ever yet proved that it was *wise* for a believer to marry an unbeliever, or that domestic life can be *happy* without partners living and loving "as heirs together" *of eternal life*, or that it is *safe* to overlook Christ's

love to the Church, as the grand model of conjugal love. This is, indeed, *smiled* at by many a pair, as too simple for practical use, or as too strange to be avowed; but not one of all who smile at it is without some cause of *weeping* over disputes or disappointments, even where much has been both done and borne to prevent them. So also, there is no truly happy home for either parents or children where there is no family altar.

Nor is this all. No experiments for promoting either social or national happiness, many as there have been, ever get *ahead* of the Bible, or prove that its golden rules are either too antiquated, or too strict for modern use. The fact is, that all our best laws were founded upon the Word of God, and all our worst national disasters may be traced to departures from His Word. So in France. There, philosophy promised a paradise, and created a *pandemonium*, by attempting to be wiser than the Scriptures, or to do without them; and it has only been by a return to some of their first and fixed principles, that France has recovered anything like social morals or composure.

But to conclude this chapter. All this is but a very imperfect and feeble illustration of the fact, that no human idea or design, even when best, has ever advanced an *iota* upon either the morals or the motives of the sacred oracles. The brightest forms of human wisdom, even when most benevolent, virtuous, and patriotic, lie around the Bible, as planets around the sun; none of them expanding into *rival* suns, and all of them shining with only a borrowed light. For any man, "mighty in the Scriptures," could easily show, and any man familiar with them see, that all the grand approaches now making towards free-trade, and *sound national* policy, and humane legislation, are nothing

but approaches to Scriptural principles and maxims. A century ago, Dean Tucker, of Gloucester, demonstrated from the Bible the impolicy of both monopoly and war in reference to all the commercial interests of the country; just as clearly, although not as successfully, as his friend Raikes demonstrated from it the impolicy of being without Sunday-schools.

So also, however "proud SCIENCE" may plume itself upon its splendid discoveries, and splendid they are, yet no mean judge of them has confessed thus: "In the *first* place, the Word of God has been the grand instrument by which we have arrived at an accurate knowledge of the laws of the works of God, so as to be enabled to make those laws the means of extending our knowledge. It was not until the sacred volume had taught mankind to look upon all the productions of nature, wherever situated, as formed and governed by one God, that people thought of applying to the distant parts of creation those principles which they had observed in the near and familiar bodies. It was not till the Reformation, which gave people the Bible, that *sound* opinions in philosophy began to be entertained."—MUDIE'S HEAVENS.

Thus you have no reason to be *ashamed* of the Bible. It does not, indeed, teach either science or philosophy; but it *anticipated* both, and opened the way to them. They are now taking their first principles, however unconsciously, from the very oracles in which humble Christians are searching and *begging* for the wisdom that maketh wise unto salvation. "My son, my daughter, know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve Him!" Be not misled by the pretences or parade of science, as a rival to *revelation.* Professor Whewell, who has both

struck and listened to the lyre of science, with a Newtonian hand and ear, says, "that it has no *cadence* with which the mind can be satisfied." Not so the harp of inspiration. It is full of both soothing and satisfying cadence. As Dr. Harris well says, "It makes us feel that we exist under an *obligation* to be happy. It maintains its post in the *van* of all improvement, and will still be seen in exemplary advance, as the anointed leader of mankind." —GREAT TEACHER.

CHAPTER II.

THE ETERNITY OF GOD.

"No proof seems necessary to establish this point; it being self-evident that something *must* always have existed; and what can that be but the First Cause, from whom all things else received their being? The same rule extends to the attributes as well as the existence of God. For if there were a time when He was without any of them, I know not where He could have acquired them, or from what sources derived them."—TUCKER'S LIGHT OF NATURE.

"The eternity of God depends upon the *necessity* of His existence. We cannot suppose that there ever was, or will be, a period in which a necessary being did not, or will not exist. To suppose this would be a contradiction; or equivalent to saying, that a necessary being was *not* necessary! Such was the reasoning of Plato, and of Proclus!"—DR. KNAPP.

"As immortality is the great perfection of a rational creature, so eternity is the choice perfection of God; yea, the gloss and lustre of all His perfections. Every perfection would be imperfect if it were not eternal."—CHARNOCK.

IN entering upon such a subject as the nature and perfections of Deity, it becomes us solemnly to pause, and confront our motives and designs, with the humbling question of Zophar, the Naamathite,—"Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?"—JOB.

We must at once answer, No! We cannot, even "by searching," describe or discover God perfectly. In this inability we are not, however, singular. Angels partake of it in common with ourselves; for although they "see Him as He is," they cannot fully comprehend what they behold. *The unveiling* of His face compels them to "veil

their faces;" so dazzling is "the brightness of His glory," even where it shines only to charm. Far off and inferior as we are, then, we cannot expect to discover much, even by profound research. But ought we, on that account, to decline the experiment? Certainly not. The very heathen were denounced for remaining ignorant of what "might be known" of the "eternal power and Godhead," from the works of nature. It was spoken to the "shame" of the Corinthian Church, that "some of them had not the knowledge of God." There is, therefore, to be "found out" by searching, what it is both sinful and shameful to be unacquainted with. Yes, there is such knowledge obtainable as will lead to "eternal life;" for "this is eternal life, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent." Whatever, therefore, may be the inevitable defects of my knowledge, or however immense the blanks in it, I must search, or despise "eternal life." But on that we wish to "lay hold;" and, therefore, we are interested in "following on to know the Lord." It is not humility, nor prudence, nor faith, to shun inquiry into the character of God. Carrying research farther than the boundary line of revelation is, indeed, unhallowed curiosity, if not high presumption; but to stop short of that line is unholy sloth, or unnecessary timidity; for, if seeking to be wise above what is written be sinful, not to be wise up to what is written is sinful too.

Impressed and actuated by such sentiments, I enter upon this course of meditation on the perfections of the Godhead, and begin with the ETERNITY of God. This one attribute of His nature is the natural foundation of His whole character; for, unless God be "from everlasting to *everlasting*," *it is* impossible to prove that there is a God.

His very being, as well as His excellence, depends on the fact of His eternity. This, therefore, is the perfection which ought to be first proved, however difficult the task may be.

That it is difficult you must be aware; for, although it be easy to quote the texts which declare the eternity of God, to illustrate them, or to simplify much the ideas they convey, is next to impossible. I wish you to be fully sensible of this at the outset, that you may not be disappointed by the results of this chapter. You must not expect that I can take up the sublime idea of eternity, where you are compelled to lay it down; nor that I can carry it, in all its grandeur, either farther backward or forward than usual. You must not expect me to expatiate freely where you pause in breathless wonder; nor hope that I can lessen the difficulty of definite thinking upon an undefinable subject, which the Eternal Being is, even to angels. The only thing I propose to myself is, to make our ideas of God's eternity as clear as possible, so far as they go; to clothe them in simple language, and to breathe into them the spirit of devotion, that their truth may have the *force* of truth upon the heart.

Now, Paul says expressly, that "even the eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen from the creation of the world." Mark the expression, "clearly seen." At first sight this seems not only a strong but a startling assertion; for, *is* the created world a glass, in which the eternity of God is distinctly reflected? In answering this question I would remind you that Paul's assertion is made on the supposition of men reasoning from appearances in nature, as freely and fairly as they do from appearances in art. *Now, in an ingenious* machine, the ingenuity of

the inventor is clearly seen; in a fine picture, the genius of the artist; in exquisite music, the taste of the composer; not seen, however, without attention on the part of the observer; at least, not clearly seen without attention. Now, the argument is this,—let the same principles and habits of *judging* be applied to the works of creation, and the eternity of the Creator will be clearly seen. Thus, since the world could not make itself, it must have been made by some one; and therefore its Maker existed before it: and, of course, before all worlds; because, however many or ancient they may be, they were all as incapable of making themselves as this world was. Now, to exist before *all* things, is to be eternal and self-existent; for if God was when there was nothing else in being, He must always have been, otherwise He never could have been at all, because nothing cannot produce something, much less produce Deity. Accordingly, in the Divine oracles, to be "before the mountains were brought forth, or the earth and the world formed," is the same as to be "from everlasting." And do you not see at a glance, that if there ever had been a period when there was *no* God in existence, a God never could have existed? Even now, that nature teems with energy and life, it gives birth to no *new* form of life; and, therefore, when there was nothing at all in the universe, God could not have come into being. He must, therefore, have been "from everlasting," or He could never have been at all. Thus His eternity is "*clearly* seen" from the creation of the world. Thales, the heathen philosopher, did see it; and when asked, What is God, answered, "That which has neither beginning nor end." So Plutarch, "Of God, it can only *be said, He is,* because He fills eternal duration." Agree-

ably to this is His name, "I AM." Such is the proof from nature. Let us now examine the proofs from revelation. We have seen that it would be a contradiction in terms to affirm the being of a God, and then to deny His eternity. He *is* not, if He has not *always* been. This being demonstrably the fact, revelation may be expected, not so much to advance formal proof of it, as to speak agreeably to it. Accordingly, Jehovah is frequently called, "the eternal God,"—"the everlasting God,"—"the King eternal,"—"the First and Last,"—"He who was, and is, and is to come." Thus His *names* express His eternity.

In like manner His attributes imply it. His power is called "eternal power;" such, therefore, must be the Being in whom it resides. His mercy is said to be "from everlasting;" and, of course, such must be the mind it emanates from. His knowledge and His love have the same date. Now as the perfections of a being cannot exist *before* the being himself, and as in the case of God they could not exist apart from Him, He must have been "from everlasting God." I might thus multiply proofs, and reason from them; but I close the evidence by the sublime declaration of Isaiah: "The High and Holy One inhabiteth eternity!" We, however, can only conceive of or define, either the past or future eternity, as infinite time:—now, the infinitude of *past* time has always been inhabited by God, and the infinitude of *coming* time will be inhabited by Him just as infinite space is pervaded by His presence. He has been, is, and ever will be, "All" in them all!

Having thus got hold of solid facts, it will be well, while they are *clearly* before our minds, to employ them

in increasing our humility and modesty, when God is the object of thought or worship. Now only observe, how *little* we can make of His eternity, even when all our powers are upon full stretch, to grasp the sublime idea. His *future* eternity is most easily conceived of; let us, therefore, try what we can make of it.

God always will be! Here is a simple definition of His future eternity; and as it is the definition of our *own* immortality, we should be the more able to comprehend it. Well, try;—God always will be; be, when time is no more; be the same, when all human things are changed, or annihilated; the same, when myriads of millions of ages are gone; be the same for ever and ever! The vast, the unbounded prospect lies before you; but although you feel yourself passing down this everlasting stream of ages, along *with* the eternal God, how short a way can you look! In your mightiest effort you are merely multiplying millions of ages by myriads of ages. The greatest amount you can bring or keep before you is only a long, long time; not eternal duration. "Panting thought toils after *that* in vain!" But, you will say, "I did not open the book prepared to make an effort in thinking." Well, in one sense, this is an advantage to me, for I need your candour.

Supposing myself in heaven then, and recovered from the overpowering effect of the first burst of its glories, I observe "the spirits of just men made perfect." Some of them have been around the throne five thousand years, but they bear no marks of age or decay; and when I shall have been as long in heaven my spirit will be as theirs is now, in "immortal youth," and theirs still in "immortal youth," when they have reached ten thousand times ten thousand years of existence. And thus unfading, we shall

live on together through eternal ages! I now look to angels and archangels; the "morning stars" of creation and time. Some of them, probably, have been ministering spirits before the throne for millions of ages; but they, too, are still in immortal youth; still serving God without weariness or languor; and when I shall have served as long, I too shall be as vigorous in all my powers as they are now, and they will be then as much in the bloom of youth as when they were created. And, thus unfading, we shall serve on together for ever, the same for ever!

I venture now to look up to the unveiled face of the KING ETERNAL! Although God, "from everlasting," His eye is still omniscient, His arm still omnipotent, His presence still infinite. He has passed down the circles of eternity "without variableness, or the shadow of turning." No glory of His character is dimmed, no energy of His nature declined, although all have been shining from everlasting. And thus He shall measure the coming eternity; and I with Him, unchanged and unchangeable! I can go no farther; the swell and sweep of an eternal stream of ages make my words silent, and thought afraid, and feeling breathless.

The only *distinct* idea I can keep hold of is, "the eternal God" will sustain me through all eternity. I shall be for ever with the Lord, if in heaven, and "go no more out!" Thus the mind is glad to come back to the simple statements of revelation on the subject; for reason finds that after the widest flight, she has not reached a hair's breadth beyond them. "Ever with the Lord," while it is the simplest of all our ideas of eternity, is also the sublimest. And *this* is the REASON which parades its power, and pretends to sit in judgment upon the *essence* of Jehovah, although she

cannot "count the years of Jehovah!" Down, proud rebel! Thy only safe place is at the lively oracles, to "hear what God the Lord says" of Himself! Believing that the eternity of God is a subject well calculated to awe and humble us, and being conscious of no other motive in thus presuming to handle it, I venture to try your strength of mind now on the *past* eternity of God.

God always has been! This again, is a simple definition in plain words; but, if the expression, "God always *will* be," do not carry us far forward, "always *has* been" will not carry us far back; at least, not with clear ideas. We shall soon be *lost* again in the abyss of the past everlasting. Try! "God was before the mountains were brought forth, or the earth was formed;"—that is a long time ago. But God was before a star sparkled in space, or an atom existed in the universe; that is a long, long time since. But God was before angel or seraph existed; that is probably millions of ages ago. But millions of myriads of ages before that, God had spent an eternity! From everlasting Jehovah had lived, when there was neither life, nor being, nor mind in the universe beside His own; for, however far back you date the birth of angels, or the creation of distant worlds, there was still as perfect an eternity before all these, as there is a perfect eternity beyond the end of time.

If, therefore, we assume for a moment that there are ninety millions of worlds in being, and that between the creation of each, ninety millions of ages elapsed; and calculating time as it appears to God, allow "a thousand years" for every one day of these ages, and then subtract the overwhelming amount from "the years of Jehovah"—we have actually taken *nothing* from His eternity. There

is as perfect an eternity before all this as ever, in which God was "all in all." Thus, whichever way, and however far our spirits move on the ocean of the Divine life, we are for ever only on the brink of it, and must for ever be *but* upon the brink; for eternity, like infinity, has its centre everywhere, and its circumference nowhere.

It has been already hinted, that the eternity of Jehovah is the natural foundation of all His natural perfections. Let us now look into this fact closely and calmly.

By this time you feel the immense difficulty of grasping the amazing idea of God's existing from all eternity, for now we have penetrated back until we are far, far beyond the birth of life or being. We have before us a *blank* universe, which was occupied by God alone from "everlasting"—a vacant, silent, solitary eternity! And of these we can make nothing. They baffle or blast the intellectual eye the moment it settles upon them. But the difficulty must not induce unbelief or hesitation as to the fact itself; for if we give up the fact of God's absolute eternity, we must give up too, not only His natural perfections, but also His very being.

For, observe: His eternity is the only foundation of His unchangeableness.

Only an eternal God can be an unchangeable God. Hence, says *Calvin*, "God is a sun glittering always in the same glory, for His eternity is the very shield of His immutability." Even *Plato* says, in his "Phædo," "That essence which has *always* existed, and is beauty itself, admits of no mutation. Self-existent being is uniform being, or always the same."

His eternity is the only foundation of His omnipotence. Infinite power *could not* belong to a being who had

beginning, or who was to have an end; because, in the former case, there was an eternity in which he had no power; and, in the latter case, a being who could not preserve himself to everlasting must be pronounced powerless in the most essential point, which is self-preservation. Accordingly, says *Charnock*, "the almightiness and eternity of God are linked together: 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and ending, saith the Lord, who was, and is, and is to come; the Almighty:' Almighty because eternal; eternal because Almighty." "We *find* the omnipotence of God, on our way to His existence," says the profound, but not always prudent *Tucker*, in his "Light of Nature," p. 340, vol. i.

The eternity of God is essential to His being the First Cause of all things. He calls Himself "the First and the Last;" that is, the first cause, and final end of all things. But the first cause, if it had a beginning, would be only the first *effect* becoming a cause; but, as there was nothing to produce the God who produced all things, He must have been self-existent from everlasting, or He never could have come into being at all. "The founder must be before the foundation," says *Orellius*.

His eternity is the basis of His perfection as God. If He was not "from everlasting," it would be impossible to prove that God is perfect; because, in that case, there was an eternity during which He was nothing; and therefore we can conceive of higher perfection. To limit His being, is, therefore, to limit both His blessedness and His excellence; for both were eternal blanks if God had a beginning. Whatever, therefore, be the difficulty of grasping the idea of His eternity, and whatever the mysteriousness of a solitary eternity and a silent universe from everlasting, they

involve no contradiction; whereas, the idea of a God who began to be, is an absurdity!

Having thus established and illustrated the Divine eternity, I proceed now to the more easy and interesting task of *improving* it. And while the overwhelming ideas of a vacant universe and a solitary eternity are before you, I begin by reminding you that the Scriptural doctrine of the Trinity is the only thing which places an eternal God in a rational, or natural point of view, in that everlasting solitude.

I tread this holy ground with trembling steps! I would rather *think* than speak; but I must not be silent where truth is concerned. Now I appeal to your understanding, which is the more natural idea: *one* person in the Godhead in eternal solitude, or *three* persons in the Godhead in eternal society? In the former case you have before your minds a God inactive and alone "from everlasting," with nothing animate or inanimate to communicate with; with nothing to engage His attention but Himself. Is an eternity of this vacancy a *natural* idea? On the other hand, you have before your minds a Godhead, one in *essence*, but three in subsistence; "the same in substance, power, and glory." There is no solitude, no silence, no vacancy, clouds or clogs this view. Such a Godhead, in union and communion even from everlasting, has about it all the elements of infinite enjoyment, and all the aspects of truth. Of course I do not advance this view of the matter, as *proof* of a Trinity in the Divine nature; but to show you how well that Scriptural fact agrees with the rational fact of God's eternity. It fills up the blank before creation with distinct ideas of the Divine blessedness. It relieves the mind to behold the Son of God coming forward from the depths of infinity and

the distances of eternity, saying, "The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His ways; before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting. Then I was by Him, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." Prov. viii. 22.

The proofs which demonstrate the absolute eternity of the Father are equally the demonstration of the Son's eternity. His "eternal power and Godhead" also, are clearly seen from the creation of the world. Hence, says Paul, "By Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible: all things were created by Him and for Him, and He is before all things." Now to be *before* all created things and beings, is to be uncreated and from everlasting. And as creating is, in fact, calling something out of *nothing*, it is the act of infinite power. But *infinite* power cannot be communicated to a *finite* being. It was, however, exercised by the Son of God in creating the universe, and therefore He is an infinite Being by nature; and by consequence an infinite Being must be eternal also. Accordingly, He is called "the Everlasting Father," that is, the Father of Eternity. Even Dr. Priestley gives this translation of the name given by Isaiah to the Son of God. Micah affirms of the Saviour, that "His goings forth were of old, even from everlasting," literally from eternity, from the days of the everlasting period. Solomon, as we have seen, introduces the Son of God, saying, "I was set up from everlasting." The Saviour called Himself the "Alpha and Omega, the first and last." The Father Himself ascribes an immutable immortality to the Son, which, like His own, could only be founded upon His being from *everlasting*. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever!"

After this enumeration of proofs, I hesitate not to affirm that if they do not demonstrate the *eternity* of the SON, then the eternity of the Father cannot be proved either from reason or revelation; for, do you not perceive that the proofs are the very same in both cases? Whatever foundation, therefore, is laid for confidence in the Father, by His self-existence, eternity, and unchangeableness, is the ground of confidence in the character and work of Christ. If the believer rejoice in having an "eternal GOD for his refuge," he may equally triumph in having an eternal Saviour for his surety and friend, and an eternal Spirit for his sanctifier and comforter. The great Dr. Mason, the American, felt the worth of this, and said, "I need such a Saviour; for I would not trust my soul to the hands or heart of the brightest seraph that burns before the eternal throne."

The eternity of God should inspire and maintain in our minds profound and habitual awe, solemnity, and veneration, whenever we speak or think of Him, and especially when we address the ETERNAL in prayer or praise.

His being "from everlasting to everlasting" does not remove Him beyond the reach of thought or worship; "for thus saith the High and Lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble," &c. And this is the spirit in which Jehovah requires to be thought of, spoken of, and addressed. Fixing my thoughts, therefore, upon His eternity, I ask myself, how would I have worshipped Him had I been the *first* creature admitted into His presence, while He dwelt alone in the depths of His eternity? I see at once that I should not have delayed to bow my knees until

I was half asleep; that I should not have dared any low or flippant familiarity with His name or promises; that I should have trembled at a vacant or vain thought; and that, on retiring from His presence, after prayer to Him, I should have been waiting and wondering how He had felt towards me, and what He would do for me. Thus solemn, sincere, and watchful should all our prayers be; for the eternal Jehovah is eternally the same.

Again, I ask myself, had I been introduced into His glorious presence for a moment, how would I have used His holy and venerable name when I retired, after seeing Him as He is? I see at once that I durst not have *sworn* by it, nor used it lightly; that I should have been horror-struck to hear any one exclaim peevishly, or thoughtlessly, "God bless us!" or vulgarly, "My God!" Oh, never, never take His awful name on your lips, without awe and veneration. Never come into His presence prating, formal, or incoherent. You would not speak lightly if you *saw* God; you would not dare to indulge sleep, levity, indecorum, smiles, or heedless looks, were God visible in the sanctuary. I charge you, by the majesty of the Eternal Jehovah, "worship Him in the beauty of holiness, serve Him with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire," and for ever *present* in both the house of prayer and the closet. There is need thus to unveil the ETERNAL, that the irreverent may veil their faces before Him.

The eternity of God places the evil of sin in a most awful and affecting point of view.

All sin is tampering with the patience, and daring the anger of an eternal God; it is dashing the immortal soul *against* the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler. In vain do

men palliate or soften their lusts, or negligence, by calling them the force of passion, or the effects of temptation. The drunkard, the adulterer, the swearer, the Sabbath-breaker, the liar, the fraudulent, and the neglecters of the great salvation, are all daring the eternal God to do His *worst;* for no insult could be greater than taking for granted that He will do nothing against such habits. The man who flatters himself that God will overlook sin, provokes God as much as the man who would openly *defy* Him to punish it. I know not in what light you regard your conduct, if you be yet tampering and trifling with the patience of the ETERNAL; but I can see you in no other light than as struggling with Omnipotence, and daring infinite wrath, in order to have your own way for a time. And you may have both your own way and your own will for a time. An eternal God can *afford* to let you run your course as you wish in this life; for He has angels who will bring you to His bar, and a day of reckoning on the great white throne, and an eternity in which to avenge His outraged law and neglected Gospel. If, therefore, you can make up your mind to dare and endure all this, God can well afford to *wait* until you die! But I hope better things of you, if you have read thus far without taking offence. I must, however, test your sincerity, even if you love the subject of this chapter, upon the whole. And if you love God, you will not be sorry that I bring you to the test, by reminding you of the light in which the eternity of God places the eternity of the wicked who die in their sins.

We have been struggling to stretch the line of thought into the eternity which preceded all time, and all being. If, therefore, you will *imagine* beings created, fallen, and

condemned, millions of myriads of ages *before* the general creation began, you will obtain a disentangled idea of eternal misery. Try! There are created spirits in the vast universe, upon whom the wrath of God came for rebellion. They began to writhe under it, and to calculate its eternity! Millions of ages rolled on, and found them at every moment of their lapse in torture and despair. Creation rose upon the confines of their dark prison; but brought with it neither light nor hope to them. All along they have heard the wheels of providence rolling around them, but no revolution has mitigated their woe. All along they have heard the going forth of the chariots of salvation; but their course has always avoided them. They have heard "the morning stars" sing over the birth of time and nature, and the once silent universe echo with "the song of Moses and the Lamb;" but they have heard all, seen all, thought of all, in horrid agony, in hopeless despair. During the long, long, long lapse of ages they have been in banishment from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power! An eternity of *this* awaits the wicked! This, aggravated by the recollection that it might have been escaped, will be their everlasting portion; for an eternal God cannot change. The very "hypocrites in Jerusalem," when they thought in this way, cried out, "Who amongst us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" Some seem quite able and quite resolved to do so; or if this be not their opinion, who are *trifling* with salvation, it must be said of them, that they are daring what they cannot endure; and seeking in reality, what they shrink from in idea. But, shrink or not shrink, eternal punishment from God and the Lamb will be the *issue of their* thoughtless career. They may cavil, contro-

vert, and profess to be shocked with such a doctrine, but will that shake it? No! Shake the eternal throne, and they may escape hell! but not till then, except by submitting to the righteousness of Christ. And, why not do so? Say to them, You *hate* hell; why not then love and rely upon that Saviour who delivers from the wrath to come? Eternity in all its glory and gloom beseeches them "to be reconciled to God."

The eternity of God is the natural foundation of all the anticipated happiness of heaven.

All being, as well as all well-being throughout the universe, hangs upon the life of God. Could He die, no one, nothing could live a moment. Could He even decay, so as to be less powerful, or less wise, or less watchful, annihilation would soon rush from world to world, and from race to race, and from heart to heart, and from orbs to atoms, until animate and inanimate nature was a universal blank! For it is only because "He lives," that any thing is alive, or can live. All creatures, and all things, "live, and move, and have their being" in Him, and ever must depend upon His being. Immortality itself as much depends upon His eternity, as its bliss depends on His benevolence. "Because I live, ye live also," will be as much the reason of all life for ever, in all worlds, as it is now in this world; for there is no natural, necessary, or independent immortality in matter or spirit, and never will be.

But for God, the life of archangels would be as much a vapour as the life of an infant or an insect. Angelic life would as soon wither like grass, and cherubic like the flower of grass, as human life, if left to its own tendencies, or thrown upon *its own* resources. There will be no less

dependence on God, yea, perhaps, there will be greater in heaven, when all its hosts, human and angelic, are as much superior to what they are now, as they are now above us, than there is on earth. Their safety will never, through all eternity, be in their thrones, or mansions of glory; in their numbers or nature; in their powers of purity, even when these reach the meridian of finite perfection; but just in the *will* of God who made them, and in the everlasting priesthood of the Son, by whom they are confederated and confirmed as joint heirs with Himself.

It is delightful to be thrown thus direct, and shut up thus fully, upon the will and "goodwill" of God and the Lamb, for all the perfection and permanence of heavenly bliss and glory! For my own part, I see no other security for the eternal *occupation* of heaven, by either saints or angels, but just that Christ is made by God "a Priest for ever." I do not think lightly of the magnetic charms of heaven itself, as calculated to perpetuate the love and allegiance of all its armies. If anything less than the Mediatorial omnipotence could keep the stars of the heavenly firmament from falling or wandering, the glory of that firmament would place its pledged hosts beyond all risk. But I cannot forget that Satan and his angels became wandering stars in spite of all the attractions of that magnetic sphere; nor that heaven, as a place, was as incapable of itself to save them from *falling*, as hell is to *restore* them; for it is just as true that the glories of heaven could not fix them, as that the pains of hell do not reform them. Although, therefore, I would certainly venture myself in heaven, upon the old and original tenure of *personal* steadfastness, rather than be out of it, I should *enter it* with trembling, and occupy it with suspense, if I

had nothing to lean on, or look to, but my own free will and power. I am, therefore, hardly less glad that God has made Christ "a Priest for ever" in heaven, than I am that He is the only Mediator now. I have not, that I know of, any more inclination to sin, or to err in heaven, than any one else, be he who he may; but I frankly confess, that all my hope of being kept *steadfast* there, "whilst immortality endures," rests just where my hope of entering heaven rests, upon the everlasting priesthood, and power, and presence of the Lamb slain. I see nothing but the power of the Sun of Righteousness, which can make any of all the stars in glory fixed stars for ever.

CHAPTER III.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF GOD.

"As God made man in His own image, we must raise our thoughts of God according to the *noblest* part of that image, and imagine the Exemplar to exceed the thing copied by it."—CHARNOCK.

"The spirit of man is the CANDLE of the Lord."—SOLOMON.

"Our ascent in the contemplation of God must be by the same degrees by which He condescends to us, in His Word and works."—PLATO.

WHILST in one sense there is nothing we comprehend less than the essence or nature of our spirit, yet, in another sense, there is, perhaps, nothing we know so much about as the faculties and feelings of the soul. We are just as familiar with mental consciousness, or with what is passing within our spirit, as we are with bodily sensations. We notice the varying feelings of the body more than the moods and emotions of the soul, and can *say* more about sensation than about thought; but we are not less acquainted with our "inner man." Indeed, there are no powers in nature of which we have so much experimental knowledge as we have of the powers of the mind. The soul *makes* us know a great deal about itself, however little we study it. Our spirit is for ever speaking to us about something. Whether we wake or sleep, it is always stirring. Both its thoughts and feelings, indeed, are, in general, far more taken up with worldly matters than about

itself, or with eternal things; but the soul is a "*busy bee*" at all seasons, although even when most upon the wing it is least in search of the honey-flower of heaven.

Now God has made the soul thus a spirit, that it may be capable of understanding, from itself, something of His meaning when He speaks in His word of His own spirituality. Hence the ancient and oracular proverb, "The spirit of man is the *candle* of the Lord;" or the light by which we can see something of both the truth and meaning of that sublimer oracle, "God is a Spirit." Indeed, even the body is a light of this kind, or a clue to what God Himself must be. Accordingly He appeals to its finest organs thus: "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" Psa. xciv. 9. Thus, also, He illustrates His power: "Hast thou an arm like God, or canst thou thunder with a voice like His?" Job xl. 9.

You now see at a glance why the Saviour described God as a Spirit to the woman of Samaria. He had just said to her, "Ye worship ye know not what." He meant by this that the Samaritans were grossly ignorant of both the nature and character of God, and especially of the Divine spirituality; but they knew something about their own spirit, in spite of all their ignorance: even the woman at the well knew that she had a soul;—and, therefore, the Saviour, who always laid hold first upon whatever knowledge any one had, that could be turned to good account, told her first, that God was a Spirit; thus setting her to judge, from what she knew about the power of her own soul, what God must be, and what kind of worship He required.

This view of the matter needs no proof; for, had the

woman known nothing about *spirit*, telling her that God was a Spirit, would have made her no wiser, and thus no better. She knew, indeed, nothing about either human or Divine theories of the soul's nature, and, perhaps, had never thought at all about her own soul; but still, it had always been thinking or feeling within her; and thus she knew more about it than about God; and, therefore, as He is the "Father of spirits," the Saviour grafted upon the root of her *experimental* knowledge of her own mind, the revealed and reasonable truth, that God is a Spirit, and thus requires to be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

Now this case involves a general principle, of universal application. Whoever knows that there is a spirit within him, has, in his own spirit itself, a *candle* kindled by God Himself, by which to read whatever God has said of the Divine spirituality. Or, in other words, our own spirit enables us to judge somewhat how God is a Spirit. Not much, indeed, but still more than we suppose at first sight.

Let it be distinctly understood, however, that my argument will have very little reference to that kind of knowledge of the soul which is peculiar to the philosophy of the mind, or common only to metaphysical minds. The Saviour took as His text the knowledge of a poor woman; and, therefore, I shall confine myself to what every one knows about the soul, who knows that he has a soul.

Now all know well that the soul, or spirit, is *invisible*. By no process, effort, or stratagem, can we see, hear, or handle the soul. It hides itself from all the senses, but common sense, however acute their ken, or close their watch. We are only *conscious* of the soul, even when it seems to absorb, or to go "out of the body." We feel *it rushing to our* lips, and blazing in our eyes; but we

cannot say of it even what Eliphaz the Temanite did of his vision: "Then a spirit passed before my face. It stood still, but I could not discern the *form* thereof. An *image* was before mine eyes," Job iv. 15. We know only the *moods* of the soul; or feel it to be now lively, and anon dull; now agitated, and anon calm; now bold, and anon timid; but in none of its varying moods can we get even an evanescent glimpse of it.

Thus, although our spirit be both the source and centre of all our thoughts and affections, it remains invisible. Every one knows this; and, therefore, to be told that "God is a Spirit," is to be assured that "the King Eternal is invisible" also; or that, look as we may, we shall not, we cannot *see* God.

This is not unnecessary information; for, in one sense, it seems almost instinct to wish that He could be somewhat seen, and not unnatural to wonder why He never shows Himself at all. We know, indeed, that we could not bear the "Great Sight;" but we are hardly surprised at Philip's request, "Show us the Father." Now, it evidently was in order that we might entertain no hope or fear of ever seeing God on earth, that He made the soul invisible. Another practical design of this was, that there might be no excuse for making either idols or images of God, in any part of the world; for as no man can devise an image of his own soul, nothing, of course, can either resemble or represent God to the eye.

Again, all know well that the soul is intelligent, thoughtful, and active. It can think, and does think, not only about what the body is doing or enduring; but also about what others are doing and thinking. Yet we do not think oftenest of what we *see* most, but of what has

gone out of sight, or of what we expect to come into sight soon, or eventually. The soul can review the past, and realise the future, quite as well as consider the present, when they are interesting to it. It can also run its thoughts throughout the universe in the twinkling of an eye, and both far back and far down in the circles of eternity. It can even dive deep into the thoughts and feelings of others, and guess the secrets of many, when it has a sufficient motive to work its wits with sagacity.

Now, there is nothing in the world so like the omnipresence and omniscience of Deity, as this power of the soul to send and concentrate its thoughts anywhere. Light and lightning move fast and far; but the spirit of man can shoot before them, and start from the point where they stop. It can also understand something about whatever it sees, hears, or dreams. This being the fact, we cannot but feel that the Saviour gave us some real and valuable information about the invisible God when He said, "God is a Spirit;" for as our own spirits can range time and space, and even penetrate some of the designs of both our friends and enemies, as well as make shrewd guesses at their precise feelings towards us, how much more, and how surely and easily, can the Infinite Spirit know all things, and search all hearts, and see the end from the beginning; and thus both penetrate and pervade the whole universe of matter and mind! Although, therefore, the human understanding be limited and liable to err, and thus utterly unlike Him whose "understanding is infinite," yet, the spirit that is in man is the *nearest* likeness to the Divine Intelligence of anything on earth. It reflects it, indeed, only as the dew-drop reflects the vault of heaven, in tiny *miniature,* and not so truly; but still nothing but the

human mind, in this world, images at all the Eternal Mind.

Again, the soul is scrutinising, vigilant, and jealous, in reference to whatever it takes a deep interest in. It takes, alas! the deepest interest in things which are earthly, and thus temporary; but still this power, although in general ill applied, is a *mighty* power in itself. Hence, man, as well as God, "looketh into the heart." We cannot, indeed, see far into the hearts of others; but we look sharply wherever our comfort or property is at stake upon their honesty. So also, *words* of affection and gratitude do not satisfy us, however strong or honied they may be. Professions and promises go for little with us, if we suspect their sincerity; and nothing hurts us more than hollow pretences from those who ought both to trust and love us.

This is the human spirit! It requires from partner, child, and friend, "truth in the inward parts," and heart for heart. We despise lip-love, and lip-gratitude, and lip-respect, and lip-repentance, in the case of all who are either accountable to us, or dependent upon us.

Now, there is nothing in nature so like the holy and paternal jealousy of God about the heart in religion as this. He has infinite claims upon our love, gratitude, confidence, and humility; and heartless professions of either can neither satisfy nor deceive Him. And can we wonder at this? We say to our families or friends, "Give me thine heart:" our spirit cannot be pleased with less or with something else. Well the Saviour knew this, and said, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

You begin to see now, and to feel too, that it was no ab-

stract or vague lesson, and no weak illustration, which the Saviour gave at the well of Samaria, when He made our experimental knowledge of our own spirits the clue and key to the Divine spirituality, and the reason for spiritual worship. This candle does not, indeed,

"Light us *deep* into the Deity;"

but still, only the lamp of revelation lights us deeper; and even this candle blends with the blaze of that lamp. How unwarrantable and impious it is, therefore, to speak or think of the requirements of religion as arbitrary, or unreasonably strict and rigid! The sober fact is, so far as the *heart* is concerned, that God requires nothing from us, which we ourselves do not require and expect from all who are indebted to us, or dependent upon us, and thus accountable to us.

Look at this fact closely. God requires *faith* in His word, covenant, and oath. "Without faith it impossible to please Him." But this is "no strange thing," although a strict rule; for no one can *please* us who disbelieves us when we speak the truth. We are displeased whenever our veracity or sincerity is called in question by any one, and especially when we are doubted by those we have done much for. Now, if a spirit, such as the human soul is, feels thus, how much more God, who "cannot lie," nor err, nor mislead!

God requires *repentance* also. And still no wonder! We all require it from those who have injured us, or given us just cause for offence. Who pardons real injuries or offences in his family, without exacting confession, and expecting contrition, as well as requiring that the crime shall not be repeated again? God does no more than this. *Could* He require less? This is our own standard of peni-

tence at home, and in social life, although we are but *partly* spirit, and our spirit but imperfect. How, then, could the Infinite Spirit fix a lower standard of repentance for sins and slights against His authority?

Apply this reasoning to His requirement of *love*. Who does not require love, whilst he feels that he *deserves* it from his family and friends? We even expect it, although not conscious of fully deserving it. And from those for whom we have felt and shown much genuine affection, we expect, as a matter of course, the *warmth* of the heart, as well as warm expressions. Thus, so far as the heart is concerned, God requires only just what we ourselves insist upon our right to, from those who are under great obligations to us. It is, therefore, self-evident that the Father of spirits made the human spirit what it is, as a soul, just that we might understand His claims as the Father of mercies, and the God of salvation. He does not, indeed, *rest* His claims upon their harmony with what we expect from others, nor upon our reasoning from our own spirit what He expects from us; but He evidently and certainly enforces them by the witness of our spirit to the truth of His Word; yes, and to the *grace* of His Word too.

For, again: we all know well that the soul takes *pleasure* in being respected, trusted, and loved by others. It is highly gratified and delighted to feel quite sure of the confidence and affection of those it loves and lives for. We love to be loved, and looked up to, and relied upon. Our spirit "burns within us," when other spirits do us ample justice, and cleave to us from choice founded upon conviction.

Now, what a *flood* of light this single fact throws upon the paternal *solicitude of God* to win our hearts to Him-

self! "God is love," and thus loves to be loved. This is just His nature as a Spirit; and it is the nature of our spirit, too. We love to be loved by any creature, even if it be but a bird.

I venture to speak with great freedom and familiarity on this point, because the revealed love of God is not understood, just as it is revealed, by any one who does not both see and feel that it is the gushing tenderness, the fond yearnings, the ardent longings of natural and paternal love, that run throughout "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." It is not the theory, but the *thrillings* of love, that breathe and burn in the Gospel.

In saying this, I do not think lightly of systems of divinity, nor meanly of hymns about the love of God. I owe much to both for winning my attention to the subject; but I frankly confess that the one sacred proverb, "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord," when taken in connection with the Gospel itself, throws to me more light upon the love of God than all the theology, poetry, or philosophy of Divine love I ever read. I mean, of course, *simplifying* light—not dazzling nor transporting light. Accordingly, God sends us for explanations of His love, not to books, nor to science, nor to logic, nor to fancy, but to our own hearts, as parents, children, and friends; so that every man might, if he would read his own heart, be his "own commentator" upon the Gospel. Indeed, no man can be quite sure or satisfied about the love of God to his soul, who does not read his own heart, as well as his Bible; for it is always from the paternal or maternal heart, as that warms, yearns, and melts over its children, that God takes the emblems of His own love to both the *world and the Church*. He is a Spirit, and thus He deals

in no cold abstractions, or vague theories, or far-fetched reasonings, about *how* He loves or *why* He loves to save us; but He opens and pours out the full tide of His heart's tenderness, as a Father who can both pity them that fear Him, and run to welcome the returning prodigals of the human family. God is a Spirit, and thus He loves to be loved. Now, I can make something, yea much, of this fact for myself. It shows me how, and why God can love even me!

But whilst thus maintaining that nothing *human* furnishes such a key to what God is and wishes, as our own spirit, nothing is farther from my thoughts than the idea that our spirit could either have taught or suggested that "God is love," because God is a Spirit. No, indeed, the fact that God loves to be loved is wholly and solely a matter of pure revelation. The Bible alone teaches this grand truth. It only could do so, because the gift and sacrifice of Christ being the grand demonstration of Divine love, its *proofs* can never depend upon human consciousness or sympathy. What I am trying to prove is, that human sympathies are, when kind, *shadows* of Divine love. Accordingly, the Saviour always drew upon parental or filial love at home, for all His explanations of the love of God; and thus taught fathers, mothers, and children, to judge from their own spirits, why and how "God is love."

But now, let us take care to remember very distinctly and constantly, that our spirit, even in its best frame, can furnish no *standard* for measuring the love of God. So also, we must for ever keep in mind, that so far as our spirit is partial, changeable, and capricious, in both its sympathies and affections, it must be put out of the question. *It is, therefore,* no clue at all to Divine love, when

its own loving is either cold or but lukewarm; and it is but a weak emblem of it even when warmest. But still, just as the intelligence of our spirit, be it great or small, is the best key *we* have to the infinite wisdom of God as a Spirit, so our love to be loved explains better than anything else why God is so unwilling that any should perish, and so intent upon being loved. It would, therefore, be equally unwise and unfair, to bring against this line of argument all or any of the *imperfections* of our souls, as spirits. The appeal of the Saviour is not to the depravities, nor to the weaknesses of the human spirit; but to its best powers and affections, when in their best state. Now, although that is never very great or good, still, there is nothing better to reason from, if we wish to reason for a practical purpose, or to bring *home* the spirituality of God to ourselves. The spirituality of angels would not explain that to us, so well as our own. Angels, indeed, as spirits, are unspeakably more like God, as a Spirit, in intelligence, holiness, and love; but as God has placed in our own spirit the *internal* proof of His spirituality; and as angelic nature has neither parental nor filial sympathies, like human nature, we shall learn more from our own bosom, than from their benevolence. Indeed, angels have nothing to *forgive* or to *bear*, in our case, that we know of; they can hardly have such a clue in their bosom to the paternal love of God as we have within us.

These views of the spirituality of God, are not, I am aware, either splendid or profound; and they keep far away from all the usual *contrasts* between matter and spirit, which philosophy is so fond of drawing. Indeed, I never could learn anything useful from formal proofs, that God *had none of the properties* of matter; nor from abstract

views of spirit itself. The Scriptures guard us against ascribing shape or limits to God, and fearfully denounce all images of Him; but this is evidently in order to prevent idolatry, and not in order to prevent our minds from reposing upon the *personality* of God, or upon the definite and sweet idea, "Our Father who art in heaven!"

He who came from heaven, and from the bosom of the Father, did not say, "When thou prayest, say, All-pervading Power;" but, "Our Father who art in heaven;" thus ascribing at once, place, personality, and paternity, to omnipresent Godhead. He also "*lifted up His eyes to heaven*" when He Himself prayed. There is, therefore, no reason for being either afraid or ashamed to think of God as both in heaven and upon the throne of it. I can admire sublime abstractions about infinite essence, cold although they be; but I prefer the simple and warm emblems of paternal love and regal majesty. It is, indeed, an ennobling exercise of the mind, to run out even to infinity our sweet and solemn views of our heavenly Father, and thus to trace omniscience in His eye, and omnipotence in His arm, and immensity in His heart, and unchangeableness in His word, and eternity in His mercy. But for my own part—and I both try and like to think of the Deity—I cannot, nor do I believe that any one can, run thought far into these infinite circles, without soon becoming glad to fall back again upon the childlike prayer, "Our Father who art *in* heaven, hallowed be Thy name!" I will go farther, and even doubt the *strength* of a mind that cannot see infinite power and glory as much in God's visible presence in heaven, as in His virtual omnipresence in the universe.

But now let us remember that our own spirit is no clue whatever to some of the revealed characteristics of the

Divine spirituality, except, indeed, that we may somewhat understand, from what our spirit *is not*, what God *is*, as a Spirit.

God is a self-existent Spirit from eternity, as we have seen. But our spirits are not older than our bodies, nor were their faculties unfolded so soon as our bodily functions.

God is an independent Spirit. One of His names is El-Shaddai, God all-sufficient. All His life, in all senses, is "in Himself." It depends upon no one, and nothing beyond Himself. Very little could upset or overwhelm any human spirit; but no catastrophe of change or wreck in the universe could discompose the Eternal Mind. The strength of the human mind is, in one sense, its weakness; for it works so as to wear itself out; but the Divine understanding is as immutable as it is infinite.

Again, God is an infinite Spirit, everywhere present by His perfect knowledge, and by His pervading influence, and by His controlling power; and as effectually as where He *is* visibly present in heaven. He actuates the whole universe as effectually as our souls do our bodies. He needs not to move at all, in order to move all things. His omniscient glance is omnipotent power, whenever and wherever He pleases. An act of His will is as efficient, or takes effect as soon, at the extremities of creation, as on the "sea of glass before the throne." He has as much control throughout all the immensity of space, as in "the heaven of heavens," where He dwells as a Father, in His own house.

God is also an omnipotent Spirit. Nothing "is impossible" for Him to do that is proper to be done. Now, no created power, human or angelic, furnishes any parallel to *infinite power*. The utmost that "angels, who excel in

strength," can do, is to illustrate how easily God can do all things. Thus, however, they are "the candle of the Lord" to us. But so also is our own spirit. It cannot, indeed, do much, even when it puts forth all its power. But still, when it tries its strength willingly, and resolutely, it surmounts difficulties and achieves objects with ease, which in a tame or timid mood, seemed impossibilities to itself; and thus it can conceive how nothing is impossible to God when He determines to act.

It is not, however, the *great* efforts by which the human spirit accomplishes great things, that best illustrate omnipotence. The *ease* with which the soul moves the body, and does ordinary things, is the best illustration of Infinite Power, to which the creation of the boundless universe was just as easy as creating a grain of sand, or a blade of grass. A world, and a worm, were equally *light* work to the Almighty.

God is also an unchangeable Spirit. Whatever He is, He is for ever; "without variableness or the shadow of turning." Now in nothing, perhaps, is our spirit more unlike the Father of spirits. It is as changeable as the wind, and as capricious too in its changes. It is never long in one mind, or in one mood. So far, it is in utter contrast to the Divine spirituality. But still, it is "the candle of the Lord," even in reference to His immutability; for the soul remains a *spirit* in both its essence and intellect, notwithstanding all its changes of purpose and disposition; and even at death, if not overpowered by the dying body, its immortality shows itself. Under ordinary circumstances, it is as much a *soul* as ever; and thus its unchanging essence and faculties enable us to conceive how neither time nor *circumstances* alter God at all.

God is also an infinitely pure or holy Spirit. Now in nothing, certainly, is our spirit more unlike God by nature. It even dislikes holiness, and can enjoy what is unholy. Indeed, it so dislikes what God loves most,—to be holy,—that it resists both the attractions of His love, and the terrors of His justice, in order to indulge its own sensual or earthly propensities. Here, then, the human spirit seems anything but the candle of the Lord. It seems rather the candle of the devil! And yet even here, the proverb is verified, if you look closely at the spirit of man; for it is *unhappy* amidst both its vices and follies. They plague or punish body and soul so, that even the worst men find out soon that "the way of transgressors is hard;" and feel that they would have been much happier had they tried to be holy, as God is holy, in all their ways. Yes, and there are solemn moments when the vilest spirit pays deep and awful homage to the beauty of all the holiness it has ever seen, heard, or read of; for, what is the cry, "Vanity, all is vanity and vexation of spirit!" but homage, although late and reluctant, to the wisdom of that holy law, which is the proof that God is holy?

But this is arguing from the lowest character of the human spirit. A *sanctified* or regenerated soul, although far from perfect, and even afraid to reckon its best principles, feelings, or desires, holy, has lofty and lovely views of the Divine holiness, as both the beauty and bliss of the Godhead. Its very failures to be "holy as God is holy," deepen its conviction that the infinite purity of Deity is infinite happiness. It is no *mystery* to a renewed mind, that the Eternal Mind is eternally happy. It is a self-evident truth, to a real Christian, that God must be *perfectly blessed, just* because He is perfectly pure. Thus a

soul in love with holiness is the brightest form of the candle of the Lord. Hence the Saviour said, "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God;" and they do see Him more in His true character, even here and now, than any other class.

But God is an infinitely benevolent Spirit, and thus also infinitely happy. Now this feature of His character finds better illustrations and stronger proofs of its truth in "the luxury of doing good," or in that pleasure which a benevolent spirit feels in the exercise of its warm sympathies, than in anything else. The cheering light of the sun, and the refreshing influence of rain and dew, and the exhilarating fragrance of flowers, are better emblems of the *diffusiveness* of Divine benevolence; but not at all of its *conscious* delight in doing good. All these sources of good to others, are unconscious of it all. But not so the spirit of man, when it is kind, and tender, and bountiful. Then, "he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

CHAPTER IV.

THE MAJESTY OF GOD.

"Faith in the mercy of God, without the solid apprehension of the highness of God, doth degenerate into presumption, and makes the Christian trespass on these *coverings* that are fixed between the Infinite Majesty, and those who are but the dust of His feet. Still we should always think that thoughts of His majesty do not diminish nor impair thoughts of His mercy, lest our faith degenerate into an anxious misbelief, or discouragement of spirit; for, though He be great, yet He is good; the Majestic One is merciful! Half representations of God are always false representations of Him. We must sit *low*, through the consideration of His highness, before we can be exalted on high by the consideration of His mercy. We shall fall into some *extreme* if we take Him up as clothed with righteousness only, or as clothed with mercy only."—ANDREW GRAY.

So reasoned Andrew Gray, the SPENCER of Scotland, two hundred years ago; and to this passage I am indebted for my earliest impressions of the majesty of "the God of our Fathers." Dr. Watts might have just read it, when he sang,

"The Lord of glory builds His seat
Of gems insufferably bright,
And lays beneath His sacred feet
Substantial beams of gloomy night;
Yet, glorious Lord, Thy gracious eyes
Look through and cheer us from above;
Beyond our praise Thy grandeur flies,
Yet we adore, and yet we love!"

It is in the *spirit* of these lofty and lovely conceptions of Jehovah, although with no hope of sustaining their full spirit throughout, that I would now lead your thoughts up *amongst* His majestic glories, as the God of salvation, as

well as of nature and providence. Before attempting this, however, let me just say, that you would search in vain in the writings of even the greatest philosophers or poets of antiquity for any such views of God as those now quoted. Plato is sometimes *humble* when speaking of the mystery of the Divine nature; but he is never penetrated, rapt, or inspired by either its majesty or glory. Even his keen sense of its beauty has no *kindling* influence upon him. He covers both his face and his feet with his wings, occasionally; but he never plumes nor unfolds his wings to soar with anything like sublime rapture amongst his own sublimest conceptions of the Deity. They are always cold, even when brightest; and when beautiful they are neither entrancing nor enchanting. Even WOLLASTON, notwithstanding all his critical acquaintance with the ancients, has produced no passage from them, in his elaborate notes upon his "Religion of Nature," that *steeps* the soul in either ecstasy or awe; and, most certainly, none of his own ideas or diagrams on the subject create any *feeling* but disappointment. Indeed, he himself feels that he is likely to be "laughed at" by deists, when he represents God as an object of worship, and all but apologises to the "Light of Nature-boasting" fraternity, for even naming prayer!

This cold-heartedness, which characterises even the best conceptions of unaided reason, is in such glaring contrast with the glowing emotions, not only of the sacred writers, but also of our own best poets and theologians, that it should be a well-known fact to the young, because their warm hearts will feel it, and shrink from it at once. Judge for yourself. I have said that Plato is sometimes humble when *speaking* of God. Here is a proof of it. He

says in his "Timæus," "It should be remembered by me who speak, and by you who judge of my discourses, that we have but human nature; and, therefore, if we can obtain some eastern tradition, or probable Myth (concerning God), we may not inquire farther." In his "Republic," also, he says, in the name of Socrates, "But, truly, as for me, I am in nowise fit for so great a subject; and, therefore, lest I should come short of my own aim, and make myself ridiculous, I again and again tremble at my task. I wish I were capable of unfolding, and you of receiving so great a mystery." Now, this is a fine spirit, and in striking contrast to the flippancy of many a modern Platonist, both theological and philosophic. Such "Socratic modesty" is almost Christian humility. But in vain have I searched Plato for any deep or adoring sense of either the majesty or the glory of God. Indeed, it is difficult to tell, when he is speaking most eloquently of "the Chief Good" and "the Supreme Beauty," whether he means God or virtue; and only too evident, when he is most eloquent, that he is least solemn, and not a little sensual. It is impossible not to say, at many a point,

"Plato, thou *reasonest* well;"

but it is equally impossible to sympathise with his *feelings*, when the Divine nature is his subject. The only sentiment I can recollect, in which his feeling seems as sublime as his thought, is that in the "Banquet," when he says, "The contemplation of the Supreme and Perfect Beauty is positive beatitude, bringing with it satisfaction and delight; for they that reach it are content to live alone in communion with this Chief Beauty." But this fine sentiment is put into the lips of DIOTEMA, "the *stranger prophetess*," as he calls her; and thus, were it

even less vague, it must in all fairness be referred to another source than the light of nature—namely, to sacred tradition, which Plato always appeals to whenever he tries to light his hearers, "deep into the Deity." I just mention this, that you may know what to think when you read or hear about either the sublime conceptions or emotions of ancient sages. These, like the adoring *bursts* of some of our own ungodly poets, take both their solemnity and sweetness from involuntary recollections of Divine truth.

I need not remind you that whatever is truly grand in the Koran concerning God is either directly stolen, or closely imitated by Mahomet from the Bible. In like manner all the loftiest descriptions of Deity in Hindooism are in its most *ancient* books, and identical with a period when sacred tradition was more current and less corrupted than now. Indeed, the sublimest of all the Indian invocations of the Supreme Being, which Dr. C. Wilkins translated from the Sanskrit, was found engraved upon a stone in a cave, near the ancient city of *Gya*, where it still exists as a proof that, had the early sages of India been as honest or modest as Plato and Socrates, they would have ascribed the following liturgy to a patriarchal source: "He who is omnipresent, and everlastingly to be contemplated, the Supreme Being, the Eternal One, the Divinity worthy to be adored, appeared here in a portion of His Divine nature. Reverence be unto the Lord of the earth! Reverence be unto Thee, an incarnation of the Eternal One!—the Guardian of the universe, the Emblem of mercy toward them who serve Thee. I adore Thee who art celebrated by a thousand names, and under various forms, as *Bood-dha*, the God of Mercy. Be propitious, O most high God!"—*Asiatic Researches*, vol. i., p. 284.

Thus it is, that whenever we can go far back in either the history or monuments of any great nation, the further we get, the nearer we come to such views of God, and to such feelings towards Him as those which prevailed in the patriarchal families, where God revealed Himself, and established His covenant. Let no one, therefore, *dupe* you by pretences about what reason has done, or can do of itself, in finding out the Divine character. Wherever that has been made a matter of deep research or lively conjecture, reason did not *begin* of its own accord, nor empty-handed at first. It had not, indeed, a Bible in its hands, nor did a prophet give it the impulse; but family reminiscences of the God of our fathers, or the fame of foreign prophets, went into all lands, and were thus the real origin of all their best reasoning, and of their devotional feeling too.

I thus bespeak both attention and confidence to the oracles of God, as the sole revealer of His *character*, that you may judge what ought to be your own lofty and lovely ideas of Him, seeing the very *echoes* of these lively oracles, although both few and confused in the ancient seats of knowledge, yet roused the master spirits of the time to enter upon reasonings which made them the sages of their country. And bear in mind, also, that no philosopher nor poet, in any Christian land, has ever surpassed or equalled the sacred writers, in either the sublimity or beauty of their descriptions and adorations of God. Every star-like thought, and angel-like emotion, and heaven-like anthem, that distinguishes any uninspired writer, is, if not borrowed from the Bible, based upon it, and perfected by it. You may easily verify this by comparing the warbled *worship* of our own best poets with the anthems of the harp

of Judah; and it is equally true of the devotional odes of other nations. In none, however, is it more obvious than in "The Golden Ode" of Russia, even when that is sublimest. How evidently the harp of Dershawin, the Russian Pindar, took both its key-note and its spirit from David and Isaiah, when it sung—

> "A million torches lighted by Thy hand
> Wander unwearied through the blue abyss;
> They own Thy power, accomplish Thy command,
> All gay with life, all eloquent with bliss.
> What shall we call them? Piles of crystal light;
> A glorious company of golden streams;
> Lamps of celestial ether, burning bright;
> Suns lighting systems with their joyous beams.
> But, THOU to these, art as the noon to night!
> Yes, as a drop of water in the sea!
> All this magnificence in Thee is lost!
> What are ten thousand worlds compared with Thee?
> And what am I, then? Heaven's unnumber'd host,
> Though multiplied by myriads, and array'd
> In all the glory of sublimest thought,
> Is but an atom in the balance, weigh'd
> Against Thy greatness. Is a cypher brought
> Against infinity? What am I, then?
> *Nought!*
> Still I am something, fashion'd by Thine hand.
> I hold a middle rank, 'twixt heaven and earth;
> On the last verge of mortal being stand,
> Close to the realms where angels have their birth,
> Just on the borders of the spirit-land!
> The chain of being is complete in me;
> In me, is nature's last gradation lost;
> And the next step is Spirit,—Deity!"

Thus did the Bible train and teach genius, amidst the snows of Russia, and under the colder wings of the Russian eagle. But still how easy it is to distinguish between inspired and human writings! Even Young and Milton, when most seraphic in their adoring views of God, are evidently *labouring* for both words and ideas, and seldom sure that the next line will sustain the grandeur of the former. The reader cannot help fearing that the poet must sink under his theme, unless he throw himself

upon the wings of some of the prophets or psalmists. But who ever fears that either David or Isaiah will sink at all when they soar highest amongst the infinite and effulgent glories of Jehovah? They are most at home, and most at ease, as well as humblest, when they are nearest to the eternal throne, and to "Him that sitteth on it."

I must not forget an *apparent* exception to the truth of my sweeping charge against the Greek philosophers. Proclus, "a heathen," as he is usually called by those who quote him at second-hand, might be quoted as a *sublime* adorer of the Deity. And he was emphatically a heathen. How, then, it may be said, could he write the following passage on Divine worship? "Let the air, yea, the universe itself, be *still;* and thus in perfect quietness (of spirit) let us approach the UNITY of unities, as more ineffable than silence, and more unknown than all essence; holy among the holies, and invisible amidst all intelligences!" It would not be easy, certainly, to surpass or equal this passage by any quotation from uninspired writers, whether ancient or modern; but neither its light nor its warmth came from the Platonism of Proclus. Christianity and the Scriptures had spread this admiring and adoring spirit over Greece three centuries before Proclus expounded the "Greek Theology," and claimed inspiration for Plato. It is thus as much a *theft* from the Gospel, or an imitation of Christian spirituality, as the paternal views of the Divine character which Unitarianism steals from the cross in order to disprove the doctrine of the Atonement. Proclus lent his splendid genius and commanding eloquence to the lingering and desperate enemies of Christianity, when heathenism made its final effort to restore Platonism to power.

Nor is this all. Science itself is compelled to borrow words from Scripture to express its admiration of the Deity, whenever any of its wonderful discoveries render it impossible to forget God. Indeed, the Bible, although it does not teach science, gave astronomers their grand *key* to the heavens.

The chief object of these hints is to remind you that neither high ideas nor holy impressions of the Divine character, are *natural* to the human mind, nor to be obtained by any one apart from revelation. The voice of nature never goes to the *heart*, until it blend with the voice of Scripture. Only the words of God can express or perpetuate any of the deep impressions made by the works of God. Accordingly, only those who love the Bible have any abiding or absorbing sense of the Divine presence in nature. In general, even real Christians are too insensible to the majesty and glory of the Divine perfections, in both the works and Word of God. This is a fault as well as a defect. For the Bible, whilst it is full of sweet views of the grace, mercy, and love of God, gives no *long* descriptions of them at once. They are all as *brief* as they are sublime and beautiful; whereas, in general, its descriptions of the majesty of Jehovah are as long as they are lofty, and as elaborate as they are bold.

Job and John present striking illustrations of this peculiarity in revelation. Job devoted whole chapters to impressive displays of the eternal power and Godhead. John embodies the whole character of God in *two* words, "God is *light*,—God is *love!*" Job, David, and Isaiah range the universe, as it were, and gather from all its starry, flowery, fertile, and watery fields, demonstrations or emblems of the Divine glory; whereas John, as we

shall see, throws the whole universe, and even heaven itself, out of both account and sight, when he demonstrates the love of God; and, as if there were no glory in the stars, or no beauty in the earth, or no wonders in the ocean, names nothing but the "unspeakable gift" of the SON as a Saviour.

Now it is in such brief and brilliant expressions that we have all our sweetest views of God conveyed to us; for the *extent* of the revelation of His paternal love and mercy, although far greater than that of His majesty, arises from the *number* of its oracles, and not from the *length* of any of them. And this arrangement of the oracles of God is equally wise and kind. He says that oftenest, which we need most, and says it in a few words, that it may be readily understood and easily remembered. In a word, God does not wish to burden, embarrass, or tantalise us at all when we are searching the Scriptures for the way and hope of salvation; and therefore He has placed the promises of mercy and grace everywhere in the Bible, as the stars in the firmament, that wherever we look we may see "the hope set before us" in the Gospel.

But still this is not a valid reason for looking only at the stars of hope—many, bright, and needful as they are. The firmament in which they shine demands and deserves our attention. The *natural* perfections of God are the basis and bond of His paternal perfections or moral glories. He is good, because He is great; and love, because He is glorious in holiness; and rich in mercy, because manifold in wisdom, and infinite in understanding and power. For an unwise or an unholy God would no more have devised the "great salvation," than a powerless God could have *secured its* success. Whatever *awe*, therefore, may come

over the mind when it sets itself to realise the solemn glories of the Godhead, as revelation unfolds them in forms of majestic grandeur, or of terrific effulgence, or of overwhelming mystery, it is wise as well as safe to look at them with an unwinking eye; for, like the gloom of the "thick cloud in the day of rain," and the dark azure of the midnight skies, which heighten the brilliancy of the rainbow and the stars, solemn views of God enhance the sweetness of His covenant character. No man gets so much *good* from lovely views of God, as the man who keeps up lofty views of Him. And this is only what might be expected; for it is as "the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity," as well as in His character as "the Holy One," that God speaks many of His most gracious promises, and breathes some of His tenderest sympathies. Isaiah lvii. 13.

Let us, however, understand well what God *means* when He calls Himself, and is called in Scripture, "the high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity." This is a very necessary inquiry in the present day; for there are some popular and plausible views of God afloat in influential circles and journals, that are called lofty, refined, and philosophic, but which are, in fact, low, vulgar, and drivelling. There are, indeed, no such *mean* notions of God amongst either the ignorant, the visionary, or the canting, as the *fashionable* ideas which now pass for sublime conceptions in many of our literary and political journals. The highness which some of them ascribe to the most high God is of a kind that almost makes man *beneath* His notice, and this speck of a world unworthy of His superintendence, amidst the vast worlds of the universe.

This is called *a lofty* view of the Deity! Well, let us

analyse it closely and calmly. Our world is a *tiny* speck in infinite space, compared with some of the planets in the solar system even; and it must be an invisible speck from some of the suns of other systems; and, therefore, if either bulk or brilliancy, width of sweep, or swiftness of motion, be worthier of Divine attention than mind and spirit, "undevout astronomers" are neither "mad" nor foolish, although YOUNG calls them so. But as God Himself is a Spirit, and as there "is a spirit in man" as well as "understanding;" and as no philosopher can *prove* to a certainty that the worlds he admires most are inhabited at all by either intelligent or living beings, good, bad, or indifferent, it is surely far more rational to conclude that this world of *minds* is far more interesting to the Eternal Mind than any number of mindless, lifeless worlds can be, however large or radiant. "Like loves like," says the proverb; and therefore, God as a Spirit cannot feel so much interest in matter as in mind, whilst there is any moral possibility of restoring the human mind to the Divine image.

It is not at all intended by this comparison to throw any doubt upon the existence of either life or intelligence

"In distant worlds."

As it is not, however, for their supposed inhabitants or holiness that they are played off against the claims of this world by "undevout astronomers," it is not in the least unfair to set even *one* man above both the immensity and magnificence of any mere orb in the universe. I have heard Coleridge say, when he was in all his glory as a lecturer, that "a living *insect*, crawling on a rose-leaf, is a more wonderful thing than a comet sweeping an orbit of *half the* universe." Besides, even upon the supposition

that the vastest worlds are as populous as they are immense, and as pure as they are splendid, and as happy as they are high, nothing is so likely, judging from the very fact that they are all this, than that the God who made them thus would take a lively interest in bringing *up* the mind of this world to both the intellectual and moral standard of even the best worlds. I see no improbability in this, except when I see minds that can measure the heavens, and weigh the earth, and count the stars, yet so lost to all sense of shame, and to all taste for spiritual beauty, that they treat redemption as if it were a mere *trifle* compared with creation, or even with human science. If anything could make me despair for our world, it would be, that even such minds may get credit for *greatness*, and influence by that greatness, even in this country, although the "new song" be the national creed, and all who care about heaven calculate upon spending their eternity in admiring and adoring the Lamb slain as both the brightest and best manifestation of the power, wisdom, and love of God. But even this ought not to induce despair. It is no "new thing" on the earth. The doctrine of the cross was but "foolishness to the Greeks" when Athens was the admiration of the world, and almost the envy of the Church. But even that did not prevent the fall of her philosophy, nor the rise of the *Saxon* mind and character, by the cross to a height of morals and manliness which Athenians never, never reached. It will not go well, however, with either the world or the Church whilst deistical talent and undevout science can command homage; nor whilst the young can pardon the vices of splendid genius, or the scepticism of original thinkers. If I could admire dazzling intellect, in spite of its aversion to "the truth as

it is in Jesus," I would begin with the devil himself; for I know of no *Christless* mind so vast or varied in its power as that of Satan; nor do I see that Satan has done more mischief in my time to the youthful mind of Europe than some of its literary idols have done. It is not usual, I am aware, to speak out in this blunt manner. Had, however, all who are "set for the defence of the Gospel" spoken out thus, whenever the "world *wondered* after the beast" that "makes war against the Lamb," whether by Popery, poetry, or science, both Europe and America would have worn a better aspect, and breathed a finer spirit than they now do.

These remarks imply no reflection upon the wonders of creation, or upon the study of them. The philosophy thus denounced as both vulgar and impious, is that which sees no glory but in creation, and sets even that glory against the cross; or which represents God as so taken up with the universe, that man can hardly be less mindful of God than God is of him. How unlike *David* is this! And yet David was as "the ANGEL of the Lord," in both intellect and taste, compared with such philosophers. For which of them, or what poet of their own order, ever rose to his sublimity, even when they got into their own favourite element of the *awful* in the sublime? Hear David for a moment:—

"The Lord reigneth! Clouds and darkness are round about Him. Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne. A fire goeth before Him, and burneth up His enemies round about. His lightnings lightened the world. The earth saw, and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord; at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the people see His glory." Psa. xcvii. But David could surpass even this, and that whilst He was encompassed by "the sorrows of both death and hell," and praying for deliverance:—"In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God. He heard my voice out of His Temple, and my cry came before Him, even unto His ears. Then the earth shook *and trembled. The* foundations of the hills also moved and were shaken, because

He was wroth. There went up a smoke out of His nostrils, and fire out of His mouth devoured. Coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also and came down; darkness was under His feet. And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea, He did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness His secret place. His pavilion round about Him was dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness of His presence the thick clouds passed away into hailstones and coals of fire. The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at Thy rebuke, O Lord; at the blast of the breath of Thy displeasure." Psa. xviii. Who does not feel that this is the very sublime of sublimity? And yet, of Jehovah, even whilst thus "terrible in majesty," David says, "He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters." "He is a buckler unto all that trust in Him."

In this way, also, David can ascend in thought amongst the stars, and stay there listening to "the music of the spheres" until he hear their voice declaring "the glory of God," and the very firmament teaching "His handywork" unto the uttermost ends of the earth; and then he descends, with something of their own music and motion, to "magnify the Word of God above all His works." He does, indeed, say, "When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy hands, and the moon and the stars Thou hast ordained, what is *man* that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him?" but he says also, in the same psalm, that neither "babes or sucklings" are beneath the notice or the love of that God who sets His "glory above the heavens;" and that man is only "a little lower than the angels." Psa. viii. Thus David makes the heavens no barrier between God and the earth, and even angels no rivals to man; whereas deistical science makes all the stars "chariots of fire," to bear God far away from both human affairs and worship; as if He were too high for adoration on earth, and too remote for either our love or allegiance.

Thus it is that philosophy can acknowledge an actual Deity, and yet disown a reigning God; and so compliment a First *Cause as to* render Him both last and least of all

the powers that bear upon mankind. Now the grossest superstition was never so low or so vulgar as this. It has often been too fanciful and too familiar; but it has never thought so meanly of God as to fill His hands, and heart too, with the care of inanimate matter and unconscious machinery, and thus to estrange Him from rational beings and moral government on earth. Even the worst heathenism hardly did that. How true it is still, that the *would-be* wise become fools!

This is equally true of the *sentimentalists* of our times, who pretend that God is too high to take any interest in prayer, penitence, or gratitude. The real *secret* of this pretence is, that such men dislike both duty and devotion, and thus prefer views of God that bring home no sense of obligation to the heart, and no feeling of responsibility to the conscience. It is not fine taste, nor real genius, nor superior mind, that leads them to compliment "a present Deity" in nature, as so glorious and independent, that it would be high presumption to trouble Him at all with either their cares or sorrows. This springs from sheer *hatred* of piety, or of that love, service, and submission which God as a father deserves, and as a king demands, and as a judge enforces. The men who call these names of the Deity, fondling, or fanatical, or weak, are lovers of sin or pleasure, and haters of holiness. For they, too, would call Him *father* if He would humour them; and *friend* if He would find no fault with them; and even *portion* if He would give them all they want!

Having thus freely exposed and denounced these worthless, as well as flimsy, pretences, which are merely intended to *bow* God out of sight, or to refine away His *claims on earth, it* is high time to answer the question,—

In what *sense* is Jehovah "high and lofty" in His majesty? Now we have seen that He is perfectly independent in both His being and blessedness. Dr. Watts has said,—

> "Thou art the ever-living God,
> Were all the nations dead."

He might have added,—were all the armies of heaven dead, and all the worlds in the universe annihilated! Yes, were all the mighty orbs in creation to explode at once, and to dash each other to atoms in their concussion, the shock would not shake a pillar of His throne, nor disturb the composure of His mind. His hand would not tremble, nor His heart sink. Nothing can live without God; but God would live were all things dead and gone. It is impossible to doubt this, for we have seen that there was a time,—yea, an eternity,—when there was nothing whatever in infinite space. Now, although infinity will never become an utter *blank* again, but, most likely, go on kindling up with the glories of new worlds, and feeling the advances of the widening universe, even until that universe, as it now is, be as much a speck in creation as our world is now; still, as all that space was once a blank, "from everlasting," without affecting in the least the bliss of the Godhead, it is self-evident that, were infinity nothing but empty space again, the Godhead would continue to be "blessed for ever." This is *high* independence! The throne of God would not be *dull* were all the harps of heaven silent; nor *dark*, were all the lamps of the universe extinguished; but this, although abstract truth, is not revealed truth. There will be no such catastrophe in either heaven, or in the "heavenly places" of the universe. It is no principle nor part of God's happiness *to try how* He could do *without* creatures

or things. It is, indeed, infinite condescension on His part to employ any creature in His service, or to admit seraphim into His presence, for He "*humbleth* Himself to behold even the things that are in heaven." But it is also *pleasure* to the Eternal Mind,—yea, its very element,—to see its own natural glories reflected by all the mirrors of nature, and its moral glories by all the miracles of redemption, and all the monuments of providence. God delights in both the society and the scenery of heaven, and dwells, as a father, at home, with all the unfallen and redeemed spirits in glory. He does so, however, from *choice*, not from necessity of any kind. Accordingly, all the armies of heaven feel that both His presence and approbation are undeserved by them, and manifest their wonder at His condescension:—angels, by veiling their faces, even when their wings are plumed for flight in His service; and saints, by casting their crowns at His feet, even when all their harps are sounding, and all their palms waving to His praise.

Now, in all this homage, worship, and communion, God will take an eternal complacency, and an unchangeable delight, even although He could be happy without any of it. There is no *contradiction* in this two-fold view of Divine enjoyment. It is just as natural that God should take pleasure in His works now, as that He found pleasure in the *plan* of them from eternity. Besides, knowing, as He does, what perfect and independent happiness is, the very bliss of His being inclined Him to share its own fulness through time and eternity with all who value His favour.

We have seen, also, that God is high and lofty in the *omnipotence of* His power. But whilst any one would

say, *no*, to the question,—"Hast thou an arm like God, or canst thou thunder with a voice like His?"—very few are penetrated with a deep sense of His omnipotence. It does not check many in their pursuit of either sin, folly, or gain. The fact is, God's arm is but seldom "made bare" in crushing His enemies; and hence, even His friends are not sufficiently awed by His power, except when it crosses them. When, indeed, "the God of glory thundereth," and "His lightnings lighten the world," or His tempests shake the earth, or His pestilence walketh in darkness, then, like Moses upon Sinai, we "exceedingly fear and quake;" but this awe soon passes off when the elemental war is over. We need often, therefore, to be confronted in the sanctuary with remembrances of His "eternal power," which, without *frightening* us at all, may awe us habitually, by sending us home to ponder what we have heard, and read more on the subject. It is wise also to look out upon God's universe often, when its vastness is most visible, and its aspects most impressive, which is the case at night; and whilst lightning is revealing its depths, or thunder rending its thick clouds. For how little and how weak we feel then! Then, however, is the time for realising how great and powerful God is, and for feeling how majestically He presides over all things; for that universe is but the shadow of His infinity. It all lies as light in His mighty hand as a dew-drop upon the cedars of Lebanon, and obeys His word like a little child. He could crush it all as easily as He made it, or extinguish it as calmly too as the sun exhales the dews of the night. How infinitely desirable it is to have this power upon our side, as "a very present help in time of trouble," and as our safeguard at all times! What position on earth is so

sweet or sublime as that of the man to whom it can be said with truth, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath thee are the everlasting arms"? But, on the other hand, how unspeakably appalling and perilous it is to have that God as an *enemy*, because of despising or not seeking His friendship!

Whilst this solemn thought is vital and vivid in your mind, think how majestic God is in the principles and spirit of His moral government. He has taken His august stand upon high and holy principles, and in an immutable spirit; and He will neither come down nor change, in order to humour any man or angel. One of His everlasting maxims is, that "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." Another is, that "except a man be born of the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." Another is, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." These are the fixed principles of the most high God; and on them He will treat, in a father's spirit, with any man, for eternal life. But, apart from them, or contrary to them, He will neither answer prayer, nor accept either praise or service from any one. God will despise in time, and spurn through eternity, every one who refuses to be an entire debtor to the blood of the Lamb for salvation, and to the grace of the Holy Spirit for strength. Around that rebel host, on the day of judgment, He will pour all the terrors of all His attributes as flaming and devouring fire.

CHAPTER V.

THE TRINITY OF THE GODHEAD.

"The writer would be the most presumptuous of mortals, did he imagine himself able to comprehend this 'mystery of God,' in any manner approaching to completeness. He classes himself with those who think that the Scriptures warrant us in believing, First, That in the infinite and incomprehensible Divine Essence there do exist by natural and eternal necessity three intelligent and active subsistences or persons. Second, That these are not, on the one hand, three different beings, natures, or essences; nor, on the other, three modes or developments of one and the same person."—DR. PYE SMITH.

"A *triadic* arrangement runs through all nature, as a fact. Triadism has a history as ancient as that of learning and science; and may be traced more extensively, perhaps, than any other human recognition. It has sustained itself in all ages by the bias of nature and tradition."—FIELD'S ANALOGICAL PHILOSOPHY.

WHOEVER rejects the idea of a Trinity in the Godhead, or is unwilling to believe that there is any plurality in the Divine Essence, ought to be fully aware that he thus sets himself in direct opposition to the voice of all antiquity, as well as to the verdict of the Christian Church. Even could it be proved that the sacred writers neither taught nor believed anything like Trinitarianism, it would still be true that heathen writers, both before and after the prophets and apostles, taught something very like it, so far as it means a *plurality* in the Godhead. Nothing, indeed, is more unlike the Trinity which Trinitarians acknowledge than the heathen trinities of either ancient or modern times; for even when their *persons* have names

very similar in general import to "Father, Son, and Spirit," these names imply none of the clear or sweet ideas we associate with the words. But still, *trinal* distinction in the supreme Godhead is a doctrine that runs through all the polytheism of the world that ever had a written, oral, or symbolic form, or a man who claimed to be a philosopher. Every great nation of antiquity had its trinity. Most, if not all of them had, besides, "gods many, and lords many;" but they had their trinity, too, although not at all in our religious sense of the word, and hardly for any moral purpose.

The YOUNG should be fully aware of this historical fact. It proves nothing, indeed, as to the truth of what the Scriptures teach concerning the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But it proves either the ignorance or the impertinence of those Unitarians who write and speak as if the world had never heard of a Trinity in the Godhead until the Athanasian Creed was invented, or the Nicene established. It proves also that the infidels who prefer the sages of antiquity to the sacred writers, either never read the former, or can pardon in Zoroaster, Pythagoras, Plato, and Proclus, "the *last* of the HERMAIC line," mysteries which they resent in the Scriptures, and scorn in the pulpit.

Few, perhaps, have felt more deeply than myself the inscrutable mystery of the Triune Godhead; but I have felt, too, from the time I studied the mythology of the world, that get it when or how they might, the great sages of all the great heathen nations would have *laughed* at me in scorn, had I rejected or evaded *their* Trinitarianism. For although it was not the doctrine they either said or wrote most about, it was the point on which they plumed

themselves most, and on which they put forth their mightiest efforts of thought. There they are *deepest*, in both the best and the worst sense of depth. A plurality of some kind in the Divine Essence, and chiefly a trinal development or distinction in it, is as much their favourite idea, as gravitation is the basis of Newtonian philosophy, or as the fall was the occasion of revelation. Were I, therefore, to reject the Scriptures, because they imply a Trinity, I must also, in order to be consistent, spurn the master-spirits of ancient times for *doting* upon a similar idea of the Godhead; for it was warbled by the lyre of Orpheus, and the lips of Plato; it was hieroglyphed upon the pyramids of Egypt, and the pagodas of India and China; it is stamped upon the medals of the Lama of Thibet, and sculptured in the gigantic and dateless temples of Elora and Elephanta. The sages of China, and the Druids of Britain, and the runic bards of Scandinavia, and the priests of Mexico, as well as the astronomers of Chaldea, and the fire-worshippers of Persia, had all their oracles or emblems of a trinity, long before Christianity taught the doctrine in Judea. How these widely different and separated nations got this idea originally, would not be very difficult to show, were there room; and it is easy to conceive; for as they all sprung from one common root,—the family of NOAH,—every branch, as it spread throughout the world, bore with it some idea of the God of Noah, whose name implied plurality in His nature or essence. This being an obvious fact, their crude idea of a Trinity was not, therefore, a discovery of reason, but a sacred tradition; and thus it was not *heathenish*, although mixed up with heathenism. Even when the doctrine came to be taught by Pythagoras and Plato, and thus got currency in

Greece and Rome, it was taught by these sages as "a sacred tradition" which they had learned amongst the Jews and Egyptians. Their idea, therefore, of a plurality in the Divine Essence, although not at all *needed* by Christianity, in support of the TRINITY, yet really *belongs* to the ancient revelations on which Christianity is founded, and out of which it grew. In a word, God preserved everywhere, in spite of polytheism and idolatry, some traces of His Trinity; and thus they are the legitimate property of Trinitarianism, whenever they are wanted to rebuke either the ignorance or the impudence of those who call it a *novelty* in the Church; for it is, as we shall see, as *old* as the world.

In the meantime, I remind you, that so far was Christianity from conveying any idea favourable to more Gods than one, notwithstanding it said so much of more persons than one in the Godhead,—that it soon put down all the "lords many, and gods many," of the Roman empire. It both depopulated and overthrew Olympus, by the sublime unity of the Divine Essence it taught; and won over to the plurality it taught, both Platonists and Pythagoreans by thousands; for they *saw* in the Scriptural Trinity of God, the full-orbed vision, which their sages had only dreamt or speculated about.

If anything be self-evident in the Bible, it is that there is but *one* living and true God; this is the uniform, the invariable testimony of revelation; and it is so unequivocal, that if he be a "fool" who says in his heart "that there is no God," he is not less foolish who thinks there are *more* Gods than one. I would not say with Tertullian, that "if God be not one, there is *no* God;" but I would *readily say, that* He is yet an unknown God. This all

Trinitarians would say without reserve or hesitation; and, therefore, they are misunderstood when they are suspected of, and misrepresented when charged with, believing in *three* Gods, instead of one God. For both their motto and maxim on this subject are exactly that of Paul,—"To us then there is but one God." This Paul said in the name of all Christians, in opposition to the *many* gods of the heathens. James might, therefore, say with equal truth, of all sober-minded Trinitarians now, what he said of the twelve tribes then,—"Thou believest there is one God. Thou doest well."

All this is, however, the testimony of Scripture, not the voice of nature, nor the verdict of mere reason; and, therefore, Scripture only must determine the *meaning* of the unity it thus ascribes to God. His unity is taught nowhere else, and therefore cannot be explained by anything else. There alone we get the *fact*, and there alone we ought to seek the explanation of the Divine unity. God is one only in His *own* sense of unity, or as His Word illustrates His oneness.

Now, we may well take both the fact and the meaning of it from the Bible, for nature itself teaches neither. The time is past when infidels and sciolists could palm off as philosophy the empty pretence, that creation evinces but one Creator. There may be a *thousand* creators, for anything that nature itself shows to the contrary. Shut the Bible, and no man can prove from "the things that are made," that they had but one Maker. Open the Bible, and then, indeed,

> "All nature cries aloud,
> Through all her works,"

that there is but one God, because the God of the Bible

is *sufficient* in Himself for the creation of the universe; and, therefore, it is needless to call in any other power to account for it.

It is, indeed, plausible to say that there is such harmony and unity of *design* running through the works of creation, that *one* designer is self-evident; but this assertion, apart from Scripture, is as hollow as it is plausible. Accordingly, PALEY, and all our best writers on natural theology, confess that the argument of the Divine unity, drawn from the harmonies of the universe, goes no farther than to prove unity of counsel, or oneness of purpose. And, were the harmonies of nature more perfect and obvious than they seem, they would no more prove, by themselves, that there is but one Creator, than the harmonious mechanism of a watch proves that it had only one maker.

It is not, of course, my object, in these remarks, to throw any *doubt* upon the unity of God, but to show that it can neither be proved nor discovered, demonstrated nor discerned, apart from revelation; for good and evil are so blended throughout nature, that reason could not refer both to one First Cause, without concluding that He was capricious. Accordingly, the heathen, whether Oriental or European, who judged from *appearances* in nature, always concluded that there must be both a *good* and an *evil* god, or rival gods. Even their philosophers, who looked beneath the surface of things, leaned to the popular idea of "lords many, and gods many;" for if they held one to be supreme, they also represented him as "the father of gods," as well as of men. Some of them, like Socrates, may have secretly despised the vulgar mythology, but none of them concluded that God is one in the

sense that Unitarians call Him so. In a word, the aspects of NATURE have *never* led any people to the conclusion of either Unitarians or Trinitarians, as to the unity of the Godhead.

We are thus "shut up" to the Bible alone on this subject, if we would not fly in the face of both reason and experience. The simple, sober, solemn fact is, that unless we depend upon revelation itself, we know not, and cannot know, whether there be one God or a thousand in the universe. It is, indeed, easy for us to ask now, Why should more than one be imagined? This is a very rational question. But who ever put it to himself or others but men who have either seen some of the sacred writings, or heard in some way of the patriarchal or Jewish opinions about God?

"What," then, "saith the Scriptures?" They alone declare that God is one; and, therefore, they alone can *define* the unity they ascribe to Him.

It is not altogether agreeable, however, to either the taste or tendency of the human mind to be thus tied up to the Word of God for both facts and their explanation. Man likes to have some *hand* or *voice* in determining "what is truth." Jonah-like, he is inclined, even when God has spoken, to suspect that God *means* either less or more than His words imply; or, having got hold of a word, very simple in itself, man is very fond of applying it so as either to rid him of mysteries which baffle him, or to relieve himself from obligations that embarrass him. The word "*one*" is of this kind, and used by many for this purpose; as if it had no other meaning in the Bible than just what it has as a *numeral* in arithmetic; or as if it could mean nothing else when applied to the infinite Jehovah but just

what it means when applied to any other person or thing. Hence we are gravely told by Unitarians, that the idea of one person in the Godhead commends itself at once to the mind as simple, natural and rational. It is welcomed, they say, by the understanding, and approved by the judgment. This, it is said, we can neither deny nor doubt, if we speak as we feel, or deal honestly with our own convictions.

This appeal was so often made to me in early life, that I determined to give it fair play, and to go into the question, for once, *without* my Bible, or by reason alone. But the result was, a settled and solemn conviction that the Unitarian idea of one *person* in the Godhead is both unnatural and improbable, whether judged of by the head or the heart.

John Howe was the first man I know of who placed this in a clear and powerful light. The precise form of his argument I do not recollect, but the spirit of it is not unlike the hint thrown out in the second chapter, namely, that the eternity of one person in the Godhead involves almost *revolting* ideas of His position "from everlasting." Howe's hint led me to reason thus:—If God is one, in the *numerical* sense of the word, then, however old any creature or thing in the universe may be, there was a perfect eternity *before* their creation, in which the Creator was both solitary and quiescent. With power to do everything, He did nothing. With an infinitude of perfections, and each perfection infinite, He was alone and inactive; or had nothing to do, love, or enjoy! Now, is this either probable or natural? Is not eternal *loneliness* at variance with all rational ideas of perfect happiness? Mind can, indeed, be its own centre and kingdom; but it never is so when the *social affections* are in due proportion to the intellectual

powers; and, therefore, as the Eternal Mind is as much "*Love*" as "Light," the *communion* of Father, Son, and Spirit, "from everlasting," is a far more rational idea than the Unitarian theory,—of one person, as His own centre from eternity, in a silent and solitary infinity!

It has been already said, distinctly and strongly, that this argument is not put forward as *proof* of the Trinity, but merely to prove that *numerical* unity is not exactly such a probable or beautiful idea as its idolaters call it.

But all these preliminary hints are only introductory to an examination of CHRISTIANITY itself on this subject. Now Christianity, as it stands in the New Testament, is both the perfection and completion of all that ever God said or symbolised, expressed or implied, concerning Himself. It is "a new covenant," but not a new religion; "a better covenant," but not a different system in its great elements. Christianity both recognises and ratifies all the cardinal truths of the Old Testament, and thus it identifies itself with whatever God at any time said of His own nature. When, therefore, Christ and the apostles call God "one," the unity they assert is in *unison* with all the unity God ever claimed by former revelations. I will now endeavour to illustrate this fact.

Christianity is based upon the transactions of EDEN; and distinct glimpses of the Trinity of the Godhead force themselves upon our notice at both the creation and fall of man. Hence, when he was created, God said, "Let US make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness." Here the plural pronoun is repeated. And that we might be quite sure that the words were not addressed to angels, it is immediately added, "In the image of God created He him." So, after his fall, "God said, The man is become as one of

US." Here, then, we are met upon the very threshold of time, when there were no artificial modes of speaking, by proper *plurals*, which defy both Jew and Gentile Unitarians to explain them away.

The Jews of the middle ages felt that these pronouns clashed with their notion of the Divine Unity; and, as they durst not venture to put the *singular* for the plural, they invented the pretence that Moses was shocked when commanded to write like a Trinitarian, and said, "Lord of the world, why dost Thou afford room for *error* about Thy most simple unity? But the Lord answered, Moses, Write thou *so*, and he that errs, let him err." Here the force of the plural is as fully admitted as it is feebly met. And so they still stand, smiling at all the abortive attempts of critics to displace or overturn them.

The whole case in Eden stands thus: whilst the word Elohim, translated God, is plural, and connected with plural pronouns, it is always construed with verbs in the singular. Hence both unity and distinction in the Godhead are taught in the same breath on the very first page of Scripture. Now Christianity, by *identifying* itself with the history of creation in the fall, has made itself *responsible* for the truth of this two-fold view of the Godhead, and is thus pledged to speak of God agreeably to the manner in which He first spoke of Himself. In other words, it can teach no other kind of unity concerning God but just what God taught Moses; which was a unity of essence, and not one personality.

Christianity is the fulfilment of the patriarchal covenants, and the language of them concerning God is of the same two-fold character. Now the covenant made with Noah after the flood was followed by the confusion of

tongues at Babel. But, however the speech of men was confounded then, God still spoke in His old way; Jehovah said, "Let US go down, and there confound their language." So also, in connection with the Abrahamic covenant, we are told that "Jehovah rained fire from Jehovah out of heaven" upon the cities of the plain. Here *two* persons bear the name Jehovah; and, as it is the name of the Divine Essence, their nature and dignity must be the same. Now Christianity takes the responsibility of this also, and, agreeably to it, Christ said, "I and My Father are one."

Another remarkable fact in the patriarchal age is, that God often appeared to, and spoke with the fathers, and was worshipped by them as Jehovah. But Christianity maintains that "no man hath *seen* God at any time." The conclusion is inevitable,—the Son, not the Father, was the *visible* Jehovah, who both gave and ratified the covenants, which pledged His incarnation, and paved the way for the new covenant.

Christianity is the substance of the JEWISH dispensation; and that dispensation, both in its history and character, involves and evinces a plurality in the Godhead.

When the founder of Judaism rehearsed in the ears of all Israel their call and covenant, he exclaimed, "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah, our Elohim (our Gods) is one Jehovah." On this principle the Jewish church was formed; and, if it be a *just* one, we may expect that it will be kept up, and that unity and plurality will, in like manner, characterise the future messages of God to Israel. Accordingly, Moses said to the Jews, "Ye cannot serve Jehovah, for He is the holy Elohim—holy Gods." Here both the noun and the adjective are plural. Isaiah said, "Thy Maker is

thy husband;" literally, thy *Makers* thine husbands; "the Lord of Hosts is His name." Malachi introduces Jehovah saying, "If I be a master (literally, masters), where is My fear?" Thus to the church while in the wilderness, and when settled in Judea, and when restored from Babylon, God spoke of Himself as He did in Eden, and to the patriarchs, as triune in His existence. In connection with these remarks, there are two facts worthy of notice; the one regards the grammar, and the other the reading of such passages. The plural names Elohim and Adonim, when applied to *false* gods, have their verbs always in the plural; but when applied to the true God, in the singular. In regard to the *reading*, again, Dr. Allix remarks, "This idea of plurality must have sunk deep into the minds of the Jews, seeing they constantly read the word Jehovah, which is singular, with the *vowels* of the word Adonai, which is plural, instead of Adoni, which is singular."

I am not ignorant of either the arguments or the authors opposed to the Trinitarian conclusions drawn from these facts; and, were critical answers suited to plain questions, it would be an easy matter to overthrow the objections. Were they, however, even valid as criticisms, it would still remain the fact, that plural names are used by God, and applied to God, in every part of a religion which had for one of its *chief* objects to reveal and establish the unity of the Godhead. The grand immediate design of Judaism was to expose the folly, and demonstrate the fallacy of "lords many, and gods many;" to prove that there is but "one living and true God" in the universe. So hostile was the whole genius of the system to polytheism, that the Jews were solemnly charged not even to mention the name *of other gods*, nor to spare statue, structure, or grove, which

bore their names. They were enjoined to abolish the name of every city, village, and spot, the name of which was confounded with a heathen deity. And yet this system, thus armed and commissioned against the very idea of more gods than one, gives, almost uniformly, a plural name to that one God! While it affirms and confirms His unity, it persists in calling Him Elohim in every part of its worship, and in each of its oracles. Why is this? The language it spoke was not barren of singular names. Moses and the prophets might have called Him El, or Eloah, or Adon uniformly. No good reason can be assigned for their not doing so, if it was their object to convey or confirm the idea of there being only one *person* in the Godhead. Writers intent upon proving that, cannot be justified in applying to Him, even once, the word Gods, instead of God; and yet the sacred writers do it continually. I oppose this striking fact to all the weight of all the criticisms ever made upon the name Elohim. Moses and the prophets have it in every page, in almost every verse, of the Old Testament; and yet they are called *Unitarians*, in the modern sense of that term! Now, I will venture to say, that if any avowed Unitarian were to write a book in which he uniformly or often applied a plural name to God, his brethren would disavow him and denounce him. He would be charged with misleading the public, however strongly he affirmed that he meant to convey no idea of plurality. Indeed, the more he deprecated it, the more they would press him with the question, Why did not you prevent mistakes by giving a *singular* name? In vain would he answer that plural names are dramatic, expressive of majesty and dominion. This excuse, although the strength of Unitarian criticism, when

applied to the sacred writers, would not shield his unfortunate head from the charge of weakness. Thus they would treat his criticisms if applied to justify the general use of a plural name for God, and thus *we* learn to estimate the same criticisms if applied to Elohim and Adonim; for if they are bad when *human* writings are in question, they are surely not better when applied to Divine.

It is, then, a fact allowed on all hands, that the most *frequent* name of God in the Jewish Scriptures is plural; and if our view of it be correct, we may expect to find that they will speak of *more* than one person in the Godhead. Accordingly we read of the Lord God, and of His Son, "the mighty God; and of His Spirit, the Creator." Agreeably to this plurality, we find the blessing of Jehovah invoked in a trinal form, the praise of Jehovah uttered in a trinal form, and the perfections of Godhead ascribed to neither more nor less than *three* persons. Now all this evidence belongs to Christianity, because it is the *substance* of pure and undefiled Judaism.

Christianity is the fulfilment of ancient PROPHECY, and the prophecies both imply and express a plurality or Trinity in the Godhead.

They *imply* it in this way: by proving the Divinity of *each* person separately. The justness of this mode of arguing is thus allowed by Mr. Yates:—"I agree with Dr. Wardlaw, that all the passages which contain evidences of the Divinity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit bear on the subject. For if Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit be *two* intelligent beings, each distinct from God the Father; and if each of them be proved to be *infinite* in all perfections, it will necessarily follow that there exist *three* infi-

nite and all-perfect minds; in other words, three persons in the Godhead." Now the prophets describe the Son of God as "Jehovah God of hosts, as Jehovah a Sanctuary, as Jehovah the Shepherd, as Jehovah the Saviour, as Jehovah our Righteousness;" they call Him the Mighty God, Immanuel, the Creator, and ascribe to Him both the incommunicable names and the peculiar works of the Father.

Again, the prophets describe the Holy Spirit as Jehovah who spoke to them; as the Creator; as omnipresent, and omniscient, and sovereign. Thus to both Son and Holy Ghost is ascribed the *same* Divinity as to the Father. In this way, then, the prophecies *imply* the doctrine of the Trinity. But prophecy also *expresses* it. Accordingly Isaiah introduces the Son saying of Himself, "And now the Lord God and His Spirit hath sent Me." With all this evidence of Christianity is inseparably connected, because it is the accomplishment of those prophecies from which the evidence is drawn.

Christianity was formally introduced by the ministry of JOHN the Baptist, and his ministry was founded upon the doctrine of the Trinity.

The baptism of repentance committed by the Father to John was, by John's interpretation of it, designed to "prepare the way of the Lord." Accordingly he heralded Him into notice as the Lamb of God, applying to Him the prophecy, "Prepare ye the way of JEHOVAH, and make straight paths for His feet." Thus he founded upon the Saviour's being Jehovah His high claims upon public attention and confidence. And with the same distinctness and fidelity John not only baptized with water, in prospect of the Son's baptizing with the Holy Ghost, but also de-

clared in express terms, "I saw the Spirit descending upon Him from heaven, and it abode upon Him." Thus John appealed, for the truth and warrant of his ministry, to each person of the Trinity,—to the Father's commission, —to the Son's Godhead,—and to the Spirit's personality. And with all this evidence also Christianity is inseparably connected.

Christianity in its first principles was distinctly and authoritatively laid down by Christ Himself, and His revelations are full of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Here, again, I advert to the principle conceded by candid opponents,—that whatever proves the Divinity of Christ and of the Holy Ghost, proves, also, that there are three persons in the Godhead. And here, also, another principle may be laid down—namely, that if Christ be only a *human* being, and the Spirit only a Divine *influence*, no good reason can be assigned for even the slightest *word* which indicates the Divinity of the former, or the personality of the latter. A human being, however endowed, has no *right* to use even an equivocal expression in regard to himself or the Spirit, much less to make himself *equal* with God, and then the Spirit equal with both. But Christ did all this without hesitation or qualifying. He declared of Himself, "I and My Father are one." "As the Father hath life in Himself, so He hath given the Son life in Himself. I am in the Father, and the Father in Me. Whatsoever things the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." "All men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father." Thus, in essence and in action, in life and in honour, He claimed equality with the Father. Now, it is nothing at all to the *point*, when Unitarians show that such expressions may be taken in a *lower* sense,

and reduced in meaning. The first question to be settled is, why did Christ use expressions which require so much reducing before they will bend to the idea of His being only a man? He had no temptation to do so, for they only irritated His enemies, and endangered His life; so that all selfish and secular motives actually forbade the imprudence. Besides, it is impossible to acquit Him of *impiety* even, if He were not "equal with God." Both His saying that He was so, and His allowing others to say so, and to believe that He claimed being so, are demonstrable *crimes* of the very highest order, upon the principle of His *not* being so. Neither verbal criticism nor Oriental rhetoric can save His character, if, as a man, He is tried by His own pretensions. And the case is equally bad when Unitarians quote one passage to *neutralise* another. Placing against "I and My Father are one," "My Father is greater than I," is worse than nonsense, if designed to set aside, or even balance, the former statement; for if this be done to set *aside* the former, it is making the same witness contradict Himself; and if to *balance* it, making Him to defeat one, at least, of His own ends in speaking. No folly is more egregious than talking of "*both sides*" of this question, and offering to determine by the preponderance of texts whether Christ is Divine or human. There is not, there cannot be a *for* and *against* in a case where the same person is giving evidence respecting himself. All he says of himself must be *equally true*, otherwise none of it is entitled to belief. And in the case of Christ, who spoke by inspiration, all that He said must be absolutely *necessary*, as well as true. Now I defy any Unitarian to prove the necessity (on his own principles), or even to assign a plausible reason for Christ's saying,

"I and My Father are one," or for allowing others to believe that He made Himself equal with God. On Unitarian principles there was every reason why He should have done nothing of the kind, for it answered no good purpose at the time, and since, it has made the Church of God *Trinitarian* in all ages and countries. Were I a Unitarian, these facts would compel me to say of Christ, in a new sense, "Never man *spake* like this man," for His words have just produced the very *opposite* of what He intended. If He intended to prove that He was only a great prophet, almost all Christendom have understood that He is "the great God our Saviour." In like manner, on Unitarian principles, no reason can be assigned for His describing a Divine *influence* as a person, and identifying it as such with the Father and the Son in the formula of baptism.

Christ, however, does this, calling Him a Comforter, and commanding disciples to "be baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost." All this is plain and proper on Trinitarian principles, but upon the others it is, to say the least, a complete delusion; for what but a *person* would be naturally understood by the words "name of the Holy Ghost" (at the time)? Every Jew, acquainted with the Old Testament, knew that the Spirit was described as a person there; and nothing existed to suggest to a Gentile that the Spirit was *less* a person than the Father or the Son, for the apostles spoke of Him as equally so.

It is then the obvious fact that Christ spoke of Himself as the Father's equal, and described the Holy Ghost as a Divine person. Now nothing rational or useful can be made of all this, except on Trinitarian principles; whereas, *on them,* all that Christ said of the Father being greater

than He, admits of an easy and harmonious solution. On this ground I repeat with confidence, that the revelations given by Christ are full of the doctrine of the Trinity; for if not, they are full of contradictions.

Christianity, as a system, was completed by the inspired apostolic writings, and these complete the demonstration of the Divine personality of both the Son and the Holy Ghost, and of the equality of both with the Father.

The simplest and shortest proof of this assertion is the fact that in regard to the Son, whatever the apostles affirm of the Father, they affirm of the Son also. The limits of an essay will not permit me to illustrate the fact in detail, but you may easily ascertain its truth in this way: Fix upon any one perfection, or upon any work, or upon any honour, which the apostles ascribe to the Father, and you will find the *same* ascribed to the Son. There is not a grace nor a glory of the Divine nature which is not attributed to Immanuel. He is declared to be, not only the brightness of the Father's glory, but also "the express image of His person." Agreeably to this, we are assured by Paul, that in Christ "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Accordingly, all the fulness of its glory, grace, power, and wisdom, is ascribed to Him. In a word, nothing higher or stronger is, or could be said of the Father, than what is said of the Son.

In like manner the apostles ascribe to the Eternal Spirit infinite understanding and absolute sovereignty, as well as all power; qualities which no *influence* could possess. So also, they join the Spirit with the Father and the Son, in the benedictions, as well as in the baptismal formula. There is, however, although not less *revealed*, less *said*, in the New Testament, concerning the Spirit, than concerning

the Son. This is not a distinction, without a difference, for *repeating* a truth is not adding to either its sum or certainty. The Divinity of Christ is true, not because it is *often* stated; for all the value and validity of a host of proofs depend upon their individual truth; and they are a *host* in the case of the Saviour, because His human form and humble circumstances had to be counterbalanced and counteracted by a *heighth* of proof of His proper Deity, equal to the *depth* of His humiliation; whereas, in the case of the Holy Spirit, His advent involved nothing that veiled His glory, or contrasted with His Godhead, or seemed to contradict His claims. Thus, in His case, no counterbalance was wanted; and therefore none was given. Indeed, the Saviour *foretold* us, not to expect so much information about the Spirit as about Himself. "When He is come He shall *not* speak of Himself. He shall testify of Me. He shall glorify Me." John xvi. 13, 14; and xv. 26. Besides, it is not the *number*, but the explicitness of texts, that *prove* any point. One, if true, is as conclusive as a thousand, when there can be no doubt of its meaning.

You have now before you a plain, but pointed digest of the Trinitarian argument, as "our fathers" held it. And I appeal to you, were they not more than justified in being Trinitarians? Were they not *bound* to be so, when they found all this in a revelation where there ought not to be one word or trace of a Trinity, if the Bible was designed to teach the *numerical* unity of the Godhead?

I have not availed myself of, indeed I have avoided all the natural anaogies which Field, following Jones of Nayland, and others, has brought forward to illustrate and confirm the Scriptural doctrine of the Trinity. I do, however, *commend* FIELD'S "Analogical Philosophy" to the study

of the young, who understand science. It will surprise them; but it will teach them to hold cheap the flippancies of Unitarian logic, when it reasons from the nature of things against triunity.

A special Providence is pledged to Christianity, for both its support and spread, according to the prophecies; and that Providence has always been on the side of Trinitarian Christianity.

I can only glance at this fact; but I must glance at it even at the expense of leaving out all that I intended to say about Unitarian criticism on particular texts. Now, God did not more signally prove Himself by miracles to be on the side of the Gospel, than pledge Himself by prophecy to remain on its side. But, were Unitarianism "the truth," Providence has all along been keeping it *down* in the world. Trinitarianism is the only form of the Gospel that has ever done the good, or won the glory, on earth, predicted for the Gospel. The sudden death of Constantine saved it from the grasp of Arianism. Constans upheld it in the Western Empire, until he was murdered. Constantius could not crush it, nor Julian wither it, nor Valens eradicate it, nor Apollinaris corrupt it. It held its place in spite of all imperial opposition, until the reign of Theodosius, when it regained the ascendancy; and that ascendant it has kept ever since. Thus, ever since Trinitarianism, like a ship, was launched from the port of Judea, it has not only rode out every storm, but has circumnavigated the world. It, only, has

"Touch'd and glanced on every land."

At this moment all nations are *open* to it alone; and whatever nation or tribe has cast away its idols, has become Trinitarian. *Whatever* prospects Christianity has

anywhere, all are Trinitarian. True, Unitarianism has neither power nor spirit to spread itself. It is almost an unknown thing abroad, and uninfluential at home. But what does this prove? Why, that were it "the truth of God," God has been *frowning* upon it, and frustrating it, for eighteen centuries!

Unitarians have a great horror of *mystery* in religion; but here is a mystery they must put up with in spite of themselves. Their system is the most *insignificant* thing in the world, of all the systems that claim to be Christian. Whilst the mysteries it spurns are spreading everywhere, and turning the world upside down, its own *simplicities* make no way, and do no good, such as God foretold for the Gospel. In a word, whilst it is impossible to conceive of anything claiming to be primitive truth, placed in a more hopeless or useless position than Unitarianism is, it is equally impossible not to see all the aspects of both Providence and prophecy shining, bright and direct and steadily, upon the power and prospects of Trinitarianism, at home and abroad. It is thus the God of our Fathers distinguishes between truth and error, by "their fruits."

CHAPTER VI.

THE OMNISCIENCE OF GOD.

"You must not imagine that while your vision is capable of ranging over a distance of many furlongs, the eye of the Deity is unable to survey the universe at a glance. Nor should you suppose that while your mind can contemplate things that are taking place at home and abroad, that the Divine Intelligence is insufficient to regard all things simultaneously."—SOCRATES.

"God, by reason of His infinite claritie, comprehends all things, and all particles of time, as they are in Himself. As if there were an immobile eye in the centre of the heavens, which should see by extramission and actively, it would see uniformly. Thus God sees all variable objects, with their vicissitudes and successions, without the least variation or succession in Himself, because He sees things, not *passively*, from their impressions, but *actively*, in His own essence."—BRADWARDINE.

"He knows things present, to come, and past."—HOMER.

"If a man hopes that anything can be concealed from God, he deceives himself."—PINDAR.

"All things are full of God, and, therefore, nothing can be hid from Him."—PLATO.

"The essence of God, as understood by God, comprehends the idea of all things."—AQUINAS.

"He who would feel on this subject must *think*, not read."—MACCULLOCH.

OMNISCIENCE is both infinite knowledge and perfect understanding of all creatures and things, as well as universal and uniform observation of them all. God *looks* into all things, and looks after them too, as well as comprehends them. Not, however, that He scrutinises or superintends everything or anything, in order to *understand* it. No, indeed; but just because He understands all things fully, and thus feels interested in *watching* them. We could see

in nature, providence, or grace, more than we choose to look at, as well as *do* see much that we cannot explain nor understand: but God keeps His eye upon every creature and thing throughout all worlds, and at all times, and is never at a loss what to do or think under any combination of circumstances, or at any crisis of events. He always knows "the *end* from the beginning," whatever may transpire in heaven, earth, or hell, or in the history and heart of all their inhabitants.

Now it is customary to say with David, and it is only *right* to say, "Such knowledge is too WONDERFUL for me;" for it is too high to be attained or comprehended in either its amount or exercise. It is not "too high," however, to be contemplated, nor "too high" to be understood, so far as the REASONS of it are concerned. Why God should be thus *omniscient* can be made as plain as why He is holy, just, or good. Indeed, it is self-evident that without omniscience God could not sustain to a certainty, in all cases, the perfection of His own moral attributes. For, were He ignorant of any creature, or any thing, or at a loss to understand how they would act, or where their actions tended, He could not be *sure* that His own actions, in dealing with them, were wise, or just, or good. He does "all things well," because He knows all things perfectly. But were His knowledge imperfect or limited, His administration might occasionally be both unwise and unjust, however well meant. In *human* management many a well-meant step turns out *ill* in the end, because the person did not fully understand what he was about, and could not foretell or foresee what the step would lead to: and were *Divine* management not under the guidance of infinite *knowledge,* and thus of unerring wisdom, too, *mistakes*

might occur in any department of either moral or providential government, fatal to individuals, and perilous even to the universe. Omniscience, therefore, is as much the *natural* security against all catastrophes and defeats, against all errors and unfairness, as holiness or love is the *moral* security against all injustice and caprice in the Divine administration.

However awful, therefore, it may be to "live and move," and think, and feel, and act, for ever under the fixed gaze of an omniscient eye, which never winks or wearies in searching the heart, nor in weighing actions, it is our *interest* to be under such everlasting scrutiny; because that scrutiny is as much upon all creatures and things as upon us, and is thus our security against *unknown* injury from them, as well as their security against *unnoticed* harm from us; for no parties in the family, the church, the world, or the universe, however secretly they act, can injure each other unknown, or unnoticed, or unpunished by God. Neither the hand of violence, nor the lip of malignity, the fiery darts of Satan, nor the secret frauds of unprincipled men, can move on earth or in hell, but in the broad daylight—yea, in the meridian blaze of wakeful, watchful, holy omniscience. Every act, word, or design, which touches the *rights* of others unfairly or unkindly, "touches the *apple*" of that omniscient eye which is as "a flame of fire." Such being the facts of the case in regard to this attribute of "the God with whom we have to do," I remind you that our study of the Divine omniscience should be personal, or begin with an express reference to ourselves, as the subjects of its scrutiny.

David acquired his impressive and enlarged views of this attribute by considering its bearing and exercise upon

himself only, at first. He did not begin by saying, "Lord, Thou hast searched and known all angels and all men," but, "Thou hast searched and known *me:* whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, or flee from Thy presence?"

At first sight this seems a *limited* view of Divine observation and scrutiny. It is, however, the only point from which an enlarged and accurate view can be obtained. To begin by saying, "ALL things are naked and open in Thy sight," is to throw our thoughts *wide* in their grasp; but it makes them *loose* in their hold. We are not sensible of the minuteness of God's knowledge or notice until we bring it *home* to ourselves, and then extend it, by transfer to all worlds and all creatures, just as fully as it applies to our own hearts and history. Do so for a moment now in your own case.

"How *minute* is God's knowledge, and His inspection of *me!* How full and direct His omniscient eye falls upon me! He foreknew my existence and all its character, even from eternity. I have been always watched by Him since I was born. Not an action of my life, nor a word of my lips, nor a thought of my heart has been unmarked or forgotten by God. My own secrets are no secrets to Him. My inmost feelings have been as visible to Him as my public conduct.

"This is solemn to me! But it is equally solemn to all, for while He has thus been searching and knowing me altogether, and all through life, thus and for ever, He has scrutinised each of you; thus and for ever each of the teeming millions of mankind; thus and for ever the general assembly of departed spirits, whether in heaven or in hell; thus and for ever the innumerable company of *angels; thus* and for ever Satan and his angels; thus and

for ever all the intelligent beings in the universe! He knows each of all creatures, as thoroughly as He knows *me;* and He has always known them thus, and will know them fully for ever."

This is OMNISCIENCE! I ascertain its application to myself, and then carry it round the whole circle of being in the universe, and back upon all time, and forward into eternity. Now I *feel* what I say when I exclaim with David, "Such knowledge is *too* wonderful for me!" But if this be too high and too wonderful to comprehend, what shall we say of God's *foreknowledge?*

Bring before your mind's eye this vast range of beings who are now under the eye of Omniscience. There are myriads of millions in the universe, and among them *minds* of all orders, *characters* of all varieties, *conditions* of all kinds; and each creature is a *free* agent who will think, feel, and act according to his nature throughout eternity; and yet there will not be a thought, feeling, or action of any one of them which is not already known to God, or which was not *foreknown* from everlasting! This is OMNISCIENCE! All things are known *to* everlasting, and were foreknown *from* everlasting!

Now I *feel* still more deeply that this knowledge is *too* wonderful for me. What shall we say then of the fact that all the objects of this knowledge are thus seen and understood by God at a *glance?* It is not by *tracing* the history of each being in the hosts of the universe, nor by calculating from its character and circumstances how it will act for ever; nor by a distinct exercise of immediate omniscience in every case that God knows or foreknew; but a *single* glance of His omniscient eye embraces the whole range of creatures and things at once, and embodies

all their history at once! Vast and varied as the view is, it is but *one* to the eternal mind, and involves no more trouble or effort than the searching of a single heart, or the weighing of a single action!

If these hints do nothing else, they will convince you of the *difficulty* of explaining this subject. Indeed, if I can avoid "*darkening* counsel by words without knowledge," it is as much as you can fairly expect; but still something, although not much, can be done, to simplify and illustrate the omniscience of God.

Now we find no insurmountable nor staggering difficulty in conceiving how God could search and know *David* perfectly and perpetually. We feel that it would be an impious *limiting* of God to doubt His ability to anticipate or understand the history of any *one* creature in all His vast dominions. But if one, why not *all?* None are searched for the sake of scrutinising them, but because they are *accountable* beings, and subjects of a government which will last for ever. No intelligent creature will ever cease to exist, or to act, or to have some influence, good or bad, in God's universe. Whatever reason there is, therefore, for watching and judging any one, holds good in the case of every one. Each was made by God, and is amenable to God, and must be for ever kept subject to Him by love, law, or force; that neither the ends nor the order of the Divine government may be frustrated or disturbed; and, therefore, as God cannot be *ignorant* of any creature He has made, so He cannot *overlook* any, because each will act a part of some kind for ever.

Our *mental* difficulty in trying to conceive of *heart-searching* omniscience, arises from the immense *numbers* it *has to deal* with. Human, angelic, and infernal hearts

are so innumerable and various, that to watch and know *each* of them seems to involve perpetual effort, and to leave *time* for nothing else. But the mass, although immense, is but *finite* after all; and God's "understanding is infinite." Besides, God is OMNIPRESENT, and thus as *near* to one creature as to another. "Do not I *fill* heaven and earth, saith the Lord?" Thus an omnipresent God cannot but be omniscient, unless He be *unwilling* to know all things, or inclined to *wink* at what passes under His eye.

The MORAL difficulty is greater, however, than the *mental* one to us; for as we should not *like* to know all that transpires even in London, much less all that passes in the hearts of three millions of people, the greater part of whom are ungodly, and thus the imagination of their hearts only *evil*, and that continually; it seems impossible to know all about the teeming millions of mankind on earth, and the countless myriads in all worlds, without being *pained* at the sight, and made *unhappy* by the scene. But this feeling also arises from the melancholy fact, that *our* minds are easily polluted and pained, owing to the principle of *assimilation* between them and what is evil or sad, whereby they take the *cast* of whatever is most before them,—whereas the Eternal Mind, having no sympathy with EVIL, can notice it without *dwelling* upon it, and remember it without *passion;* because He has to *judge* it for eternity, without partiality. "God cannot be *tempted* of evil," nor *contaminated* by it; and, therefore, although it offend Him, it cannot infect or affect Him as it does us. If it did, He would have dashed all *fallen* worlds to atoms long ago; for He sees more evil, and endures more *provocation* every day, than we would bear

with for an hour. It is because "He is *God*, and not *man*," that evil-doers are not consumed at once.

This is about as far as I can go in abstract reasoning, without becoming abstruse, and getting out of my depth. And if I leave the matter as mysterious as I found it, I must betake myself to David's apology,—"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high; I cannot attain to it!"

But if omniscience cannot be explained, the possession and exercise of it by God can be proved indispensable to the safety, government, and perfection of all the works of God in all worlds, now and for ever. Omniscience is essential to the wise oncarrying and perfecting of the salvation of the church.

Salvation is the greatest of all the works of God; and therefore I begin with it. Now, what is it,—since Christ died, to save even *one* sinner? In general, it is to bring him, by a series of special providences, under the Gospel; to work gradually upon his heart and conscience by the Spirit through the Word; to win his confidence to the cross, and his desires to the throne of grace, and his love to holiness; and then to keep him from both apostacy and despair. But, do you not see and feel that none of these acts could be carried on, or begun, unless an *omniscient* eye were kept upon the sinner? God must observe the sinner's *character*, in order to suit His drawing providences and converting grace to it. He must weigh his *case* in order to cheer or check him as his spirit needs. He must watch his *lot* in order to keep him safe amidst its trials and snares.

Now, what is thus necessary for one Christian is wanted *by all; for* although all are not alike tried, tempted, or

changeable, all are enough so to need watching, and to require upholding. Alas! no eye would keep long or steadily upon God, if God did not keep His eye constantly upon even the best of His children!

O, Christian youth, how sweet and sublime are thy privileges!—*honours* I ought to call them! Thy God is doing *in* thee, and *for* thee, a work which fixes His paternal omniscience upon thee,—upon thy *life*, in all its vicissitudes, —upon thy *heart*, in all its cares,—upon thy *soul*, in all its straits,—upon thy *spirits*, in all their variations,—upon thy conscience, in all its misgivings. Your heavenly Father *knoweth* your frame, your way, your work, your warfare. His infinite understanding judges what is best for you, and His unerring wisdom guides His omnipotence in making all things work together for your good. LOVELY OMNISCIENCE! which thus keeps its eye for *good* upon all the heirs of salvation, wherever they are, and whatever be their lot. They may sing even in the wilderness, like *Hagar*, "Thou, God, seest me;" and like *Job* in the dark, "Thou knowest the way I take." Omniscience is essential to the exercise of a wise and efficient providence, in both the world and the Church.

We recognise the hand of Providence chiefly as it raises or sinks individuals, families, and nations, on the LADDER of life and circumstances.

Now, if God could not know to a certainty, beforehand, the *effect* of a change up or down, He could never be *sure* that He was doing *wisely* in making changes. Why are we in such *suspense* when we venture upon a new and important step in life? Because we are uncertain how it will turn out in the end. And if upon the narrow scale of our affairs ignorance or rashness may prove ruinous,

what a tremendous thing it would be if God could not foresee, or did not calculate, the consequences of His measures, seeing their effects will run on through all time, and even into eternity! A God not omniscient could never be *safe* to make one great change in the lot of a nation, family, or individual. At least, he could only maintain his justice and wisdom by *undoing* what had been done by mistake; and had God to *rectify* mistakes, his authority would soon be despised, and all confidence in him shaken.

Thus, whatever difficulties attach to omniscience, the want of it involves palpable contradictions—yea, unutterable horrors; for were not God omniscient, there would be an omnipotent hand moving the helm of the universe in the dark and at random, and a resistless will, which could seldom be wise even when it meant well. But "He knoweth the end from the beginning," and, therefore, doeth all things well. However He may change our lot, we are as sure, if we love Him, to *approve* of His conduct eventually, as He is sure to "do what seemeth good in His own sight." Omniscience was essential in order to the creation and arrangement of all things in nature.

In this small volume I can only skirt the edges and skim the surface of universal nature, and hardly that. Now you know something of the *power* of the ELEMENTS. Thunder and lightning, whirlwinds and earthquakes, and the extremes of heat and cold, have forced upon you awful ideas of the tremendous energies of nature. But do you not see that if God had not understood their character and calculated their force He could not have been sure of their *effect* upon the earth, air, or sea, nor have known how to combine or control them for general usefulness or safety? Om-

nipotence without omniscience here, or all power without all knowledge, might have worked fatally, upon all nature, because it must have worked *blindly*, or at *haphazard*, with dangerous instruments.

In like manner God must have thoroughly understood every particle and atom which form the globe, for had He not, He could not have been sure that the ground would be fruitful, or even capable of cultivation; nor sure that its soils would not crystallise, or transmute themselves into metals or minerals, and thus the earth become a world of *mines*, instead of being a world of green fields and gardens.

Again; what but omniscience could have made sure that animals and vegetables intended for *food* would not turn out to be *poison*, or maddening and stupifying *drugs* to man? There are the seeds of both delirium and death in some plants and animals. WHY? Evidently (amongst other reasons) to remind us that God knew all the *qualities* of all things minutely, and placed and proportioned them according to a rule, and for an express purpose.

Again; what but omniscience could have made sure that the immense and countless orbs which the hand of Omnipotence launched into the heavens would not *jar* in their courses, and thus bring on concussions which might darken their splendour, or dash them to atoms? Infinite power without infinite wisdom would be no security against such a catastrophe in the mechanism of the universe. "*The music of the spheres*" might have been the everlasting "crash of worlds," had not God known exactly how to place and guide "the stars in their courses," agreeably to their individual density, and relative to the centre of gravity.

Illustrations of this kind could easily be multiplied from every department of creation, but my object is merely to show how omniscience *could* be proved from the order, properties, and operations of nature. It is as clearly seen from creation as is "the eternal power of the Godhead." But though seen, it is incomprehensible to us; for all God's knowledge of the universe was *foreknowledge*, when nothing existed. What a fact! Every atom, element, substance, property, and combination of matter or mind, was *foreseen* by God from everlasting! He knew all and each in eternal idea and design, and thus knows them in their actual forms, relations, and influence.

Omniscience, therefore, resolves itself into the simple and sublime maxim that the God whose wisdom planned all things, and whose power made all things, cannot but understand them all, and be as completely a *judge* of them for ever, as He was certainly the author of them at first.

But if omniscience be thus certain and ceaseless in the superintendence of nature and providence, we may be quite sure that it overlooks nothing, but scrutinises everything in personal religion.

The eye that surveys the universe concentrates its keen and kindling gaze upon the *heart!* It overlooks nothing, but it looks chiefly into the heart, and oftenest into *human* hearts.

I say "*human*," because *angelic* hearts are neither treacherous nor changeable now; and thus, although not unwatched, need but little searching. Omniscience has not much to *do*, because little to *suspect*, amongst the armies of heaven. God, indeed, "chargeth even His angels with folly;" but not with *wilful* folly, and never *with hypocrisy* or insincerity. They are foolish compared

with His infinite wisdom, but not as compared with the *wisest* of men. There is only "*silence* in heaven" when the ARMIES of heaven are baffled or startled by the *mysteries* of providence on earth, and even that silence is but for a short space, and invariably followed either by a "new song," or by the loud shout, "Alleluia, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints!"

And as to the *fiendish* or infernal *hearts* of SATAN and his angels, they also do not require so much searching as *human* hearts; for although their designs and desires against God and man are often deep, and always malignant, they never wear an *equivocal* form, or pretend to be *friendly;* and thus, whatever power may be required to *defeat* them, no discrimination is wanted in order to *detect* them. Besides, God looks for nothing *good* from fallen angels, and thus has nothing to *balance* in weighing their actions, intentions, or motives, because nothing but hostility to expect from them.

It is not so in regard to man. We are "prisoners of hope," and probationers for eternity, which Satan and his angels are not; and thus God has to search our hearts for *good* as well as for evil, and to guard against our treacherous friendship as well as our natural enmity and apathy. Besides, He *wishes*, as well as expects and requires, to find "some good thing" in *our* hearts towards Him, and is solicitous—yea, *intent*—to have the love, confidence, and submission of human hearts. This is the reason why they are chiefly searched, watched, and weighed. He cares much *for* them, and, therefore, looks much *at* them.

God does this for His own sake. His final object is to

gather around His throne a company of spiritual and sincere worshippers, who, through eternity, shall never weary of His service, nor pain His sight, nor abuse His favour. He is, therefore, *choice* in His selection, because He is a Spirit, and thus "requires to be worshipped in spirit and in truth." The proud, hypocritical, and half-hearted do not *suit* His service on earth or in heaven. For although He will neither hinder nor object to the *worst* of them coming into His service and hoping in His salvation, if they only embrace them honestly for *holy* purposes, yet He will *test* their honesty and *judge* their purposes before He admits them into His presence, and will allow none to "ascend His holy hill," or dwell in His heavenly temple, but such as acquire "clean hands and a pure heart." He will *do* and *give* everything necessary, in order to renew the heart and sanctify the character of a sinner, because He wishes sinners to become *saints*, and has spared no expense to make them meet for the work and worship of heaven; but He will *shut* the door of heaven in the face of all hypocrites and unfaithful servants, even although He opened it by the sacrifice of His own Son, and keeps it open by the agency of His Spirit! And who can wonder? Why *should*—how *could*—God admit into His presence, to dwell for ever with Him, any one who cares for nothing but just escape from hell? What pleasure or interest could He take in any one, or what *use* could He make of any one, who cares nothing further about Him than to escape *punishment* from Him? or, who would do nothing to serve Him if there were no *danger* from leaving all undone? If such persons could be happy in heaven, their presence and services there could certainly give God no *pleasure* or satisfaction!

This, then, is one reason why He applies omniscience to the heart and motives of every man, that He may keep *out* of His heavenly kingdom not only all "that defileth," but also the hypocritical, insincere, and heartless; for they *would go in*, if they were allowed to enter. Even the workers of iniquity, as well as "the foolish virgins," will *try* to gain admittance, and only give up knocking and crying, "Open to us," when the *thunder* of the sentence, "Depart from Me, for I never knew you," stops their stunning clamour under the peals of the last trumpet!

God searches the heart in religion for the sake, also, of those who are in heaven already. And why should either saints or angels there be disturbed or distressed by a mixture of unholy or heartless company in their pure and peaceful fellowship? What have angels *done* that they should have *quartered* upon them men who care for nothing but just to be out of the *reach* of the flames of hell? Besides, "what *fellowship*" could a holy angel, who finds all his happiness in loving, fearing, and serving God and the Lamb supremely, hold with persons who love nothing in heaven but *ease*, and who loved nothing on earth but gain, gaiety, or amusement?

Now, if it would be *unfair* to all the innumerable company of angels to intrude unholy, or unprincipled, or unconverted men upon their society, much more would it be unwise and imprudent to let them into "the general assembly" of redeemed spirits. For even if the *bad* did not peril the good, nor bring on any such *apostasy* as Satan produced, the union would be productive of pain, embarrassment, and confusion, and do some kind of evil to the good without *mending* the bad; for it is both absurd and impious to think that either the scenes or the society of

glory could change for the *better* those who had resisted grace and refused to be cleansed by the blood of the Lamb! But it is needless to argue the inefficiency of an experiment that will never be tried upon any man who neglects salvation or dislikes holiness on earth: I therefore conclude this chapter by commending to you, as a maxim, an avowal made by James, of Birmingham: "Were there a spot in the universe where Jehovah would not *watch* me, I would not choose to dwell there."

CHAPTER VII.

THE WISDOM OF GOD.

"How stupendous must be that wisdom which directed infinite power, and by which everything was established in number, weight, and measure! He knew the exact quantity requisite of that invisible force whereon fermentation, heat, explosion, repulsion, and the four attractions depend; which, had it been greater or less, might have produced nothing but disorder in nature. He proportioned the elements, that none of them might predominate or fall deficient, and contrived springs for mingling them together, that they might concur in forming the productions He designed. Nor is His wisdom less conspicuous in the moral than in the natural world."—TUCKER'S LIGHT OF NATURE.

"There is *relative* perfection in every natural thing, and *absolute* perfection in the whole. Throughout the universe there is compensation for every irregularity."—FIELD'S ANAL. PHIL.

"The incalculable complications of the universe of materials and motions, of matter and mind, have been so mutually adapted as to produce the desired results, and these results good."—MACCULLOCH.

"In an organised product of nature, all the parts are mutually ends and means. Nothing is in vain, and nothing by chance."—KANT.

"I beseech my reader that he do, with me, admire and celebrate the wisdom of the Creator in the form of the world, and also in its motion, so recondite and admirable. But whoever is too weak to believe the Copernican system, without harm to his piety, let him cease from wandering through the universe with philosophers, and, lifting up his eyes to what he can see, pour out his own heart in worship of God, assured that he gives Him no less worship than the astronomer who sees more with his *inward* eyes."—KEPLER.

"We can not only hold with Galen and Harvey, and all the great physiologists, that the organs of animals give evidence of a *purpose*;—not only assert with Cuvier that this conviction of a purpose can alone enable us to understand every part of every living thing;—not only say with Newton, that every step in philosophy brings us nearer to the First Cause: but we can go much further, and declare with Newton that 'this beautiful system could have its origin no other way than by the purpose and command of an intelligent Being who governs all things.'"—WHEWELL.

IN the chapter on omniscience we endeavoured to fathom some of the depths of Divine knowledge, but found them

"unfathomable mines," in which thought is soon lost and feeling stunned. But if we were compelled to retire, baffled and humbled, from the attempt to comprehend how all things are perfectly understood by God, "from everlasting to everlasting," at one glance, we retired, I hope, as in the company of David, when he said, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;" and of Paul, when he exclaimed, "O the depths of the riches of the knowledge of God!" I hope so, because it is a dangerous thing to be baffled without being humbled at the same time. The mind will not bear to be often nonplussed or perplexed by either mystery or majesty, unless the points where they become overpowering throw it back upon what is pleasing, or make us fall at the feet of our heavenly Father with child-like simplicity and meekness. A succession of defeats which do not humble the understanding can harden the heart, or tempt us to think that what is so hard to comprehend may be safely let alone.

The only effectual safeguard against this is a *devotional* spirit. Indeed, whoever will not fall down and worship, whenever he is overpowered by thinking about God, will try to forget God. David and Paul were so fully aware of this, that whenever their reason began to drop the wing they began to bow the knee. The *saint* adored when the man was struck dumb. The defeat of their reason was the triumph of their faith. The moment they could force their thoughts no farther, safely or clearly, they fell back upon the plain and sweet views of the Divine character which had made them thoughtful, instead of giving way to the petulance of either wounded pride or mortified curiosity.

But when I say this of them, I mean more by a devo-

tional spirit than just praying or adoring. They did both. Not, however, only because it was their duty. Nothing is more obvious to me, than that David and Paul, the great students of the Divine mysteries, whether of God or His government, went so far into the *enjoyment* of all that is beautiful and sweet in grace and glory, that they saw clearly how they could be happy for ever were all that is mysterious to remain so for ever. And no wonder! For as no mystery of either the Divine nature or government, nor all their mysteries together, prevented the display of Divine goodness in forms of paternal, mediatorial, and sanctifying *love*, but actually *led* to the Father's grace, and to the Son's sacrifice, and to the Spirit's work; there is enough in these tender *unbosomings* of the Godhead to enshrine all mysteries with both attractive and entrancing beauty. These form an ark in the deep waters of mystery in which the soul can "find rest" even when these waters are darkest.

This is the devotional spirit of the sacred writers. Mysteries both awe and humble them, but they do not *disconcert* them. Like larks, which spring up singing in the face of the dark cloud, the moment the rainbow breaks out upon it, just as if they saw nothing but "the bow in the cloud," and the diamond-tints it gives to the falling rain; so the men whom God has made models of devotion to us warble or worship around all the attributes and acts of God, even when both become incomprehensible, as if each was only

"Dark from excess of brightness,"

and all intended to inspire filial confidence as well as reverential awe.

This maxim is of universal application, and has regu-

lated my own spirit all throughout the former chapters, although not formally brought out until now. The fact is, we specially need it, when we come to judge of Divine wisdom; for that is often "hidden wisdom," and always deep, even when richest and most obvious. And yet we are specially called upon by God to *study* His wisdom, that we may both admire and adore it. This is a remarkable fact! You will feel it to be so if you consider how you would be surprised were the greatest statesmen of Europe to invite you to judge of their wisdom from the fixed principles and designs of their policy. You would wonder why they should wish for *your* opinion? So also, were any profound mechanist, manufacturer, or merchant, who did business upon a vast scale and in varied forms, to submit his plans to you, and seek for your deliberate judgment upon his own long and deeply studied schemes, you would be very much surprised, and could not but feel that either a high compliment was thus paid to your discernment, or that the appeal was mockery. What then ought we to think of the fact, that God invites us to study His wisdom? He is not mocking us when urging us to apply any little wisdom or discernment we have to His infinite, infallible, and "manifold wisdom." He *wishes* us to grow wiser by considering it. He personifies His wisdom, as a lovely virgin, or as a venerable matron, imploring the young especially, by all the beauties of holiness, and all the rewards of virtue, to listen to her voice, and to treasure up her words. He even brings forward His Son, under the name "Wisdom," pleading thus with men, "Hear instruction and be wise. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and My revenue than choice silver. Blessed is the man that heareth Me; watching

daily at My gates; waiting at the post of My doors. For whoso findeth Me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate Me love death." Prov. viii. 33. It deserves particular attention that in these urgent invitations to study His wisdom, God points us to both His Word and His works; or to creation as well as to redemption. Hence, before the Son introduces Himself as the Mediator, saying, "My delights were with the sons of men from everlasting," He says, "The Lord possessed Me in the beginning, before His works of old; or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth. When there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, was I brought forth. When He prepared the heavens, I was there; when He set a compass upon the face of the depth. Then was I by Him as one brought up with Him; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth." Prov. viii. 22. Thus creation, as well as redemption, is distinctly brought into notice by the Son, when the Father claims our attention to His own wisdom.

Now this is throwing open an immense and amazing field of observation to us; and whatever else it implies, or involves, it certainly implies no small compliment to our understanding; for it evidently proceeds upon the fact, that we are *capable* of forming some sound judgment upon the wisdom displayed in both nature and revelation. This fact must not be forgotten. It is no humility to think meanly of our rational faculties. In general, it is mere sloth or worldliness that *whines* about their weakness. They are, indeed, weak and wayward too; but those who

make that an excuse for not noticing the works and ways of God, can put their faculties on full stretch to judge of what is wise in business or policy, and they have no small confidence in their own sagacity. They both can and do judge for themselves of the wisdom of their solicitor and doctor; or, at least, do not trust them, until they have some good reason for thinking them wise. But we are far more interested in acquiring such a conviction of the wisdom of God, as shall inspire admiration of it, and confidence in it. Now that understanding of the Divine wisdom, we are capable of acquiring. It is neither above nor beyond our reach. God treats us as both rational and curious, and does not think it beneath Him to submit even His wisdom to our inspection; nor unworthy of Him to wish for our approbation of it.

It is, however, self-evident that, in regard to the generality of mankind, God does not expect them to be laborious or minute students of His wisdom. Comparatively few can be either philosophers or theologians, in a scientific sense. But, as all can trace out in His Word and works, enough of His wisdom to make themselves "wise unto salvation," and Him an object of confidence, He does both expect and demand that all should keep their eyes open, and their minds teachable, and their spirit prayerful. In a word, God intends that His wisdom shall be the eternal study of all who now love to look into it, by the light of His own Word; and, therefore, He claims the attention of all to it.

You will perceive from the spirit of these remarks, that I am not likely to draw deeply upon your powers of thinking, nor to set you a hard lesson on this attribute of Jehovah. Indeed, were the subject very difficult, as a

practical one, I would not meddle with it in this little devotional volume; because in itself, it is as wide as the works of God, and as varied too. Besides, we have seen that so far as the study of Divine wisdom is a *universal* duty, scientific knowledge is out of the question. Those who have any, or can easily acquire some, are bound to apply it so as to endear to themselves, and to illustrate to others, the sublime oracle, that God "is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working;" but those who have not much time do well to confine themselves to creation, just as they see it with the naked eye; and to providence, just as it works around them; and to redemption, just as it lies upon the surface of the Gospel. This is the view I intend to take of the subject, in order that you may see how much any one, without either science or learning, may both discover and enjoy of the wisdom of God.

Now, we have seen that it was by bringing omniscience home to himself, as searching and trying *him*, that David learned its application to all things, and thus came under a holy awe of its universal scrutiny. He seems also to have begun with himself, in studying the wisdom of God in creation. "I am fearfully and wonderfully made," he exclaims, before exclaiming, "Marvellous are Thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well." Thus he did not start away amongst the remote or magnificent wonders of creation, until he had looked at his own frame and faculties, and thought of them even as they were in embryo. Psa. cxxxix. 14. This is so characteristic of his spirit, that it is only fair dealing with his words, when he names "Babes and sucklings," *before* contemplating "the moon and stars," to conclude that he usually started from near

and familiar points, when tracing either the wisdom or the power of God. Psa. viii.

David was not singular in this. Paley says, "For my part, I take my stand on human *anatomy*, as proof of an intelligent Creator." And well he might! The organs of any of the senses are triumphant demonstrations of Divine wisdom. This was eloquently put by an ancient writer, however doubtful its real authorship may be. Hermes Trismegistus, as he is called, says, "Dost thou understand, my son, the embryo man? Who erected that fine fabric? Who carved the eyes; the crystal windows of light, and the guides of the body? Who bored the nostrils and ears, those loop-holes of scents and sounds? Who stretched and knit the sinews and ligaments, so as to fasten every member? Who cast the hollow veins, those channels of the blood? Who set the bones, those pillars and rafters of the body? Who dug the pores, for relieving the system? Who made the heart, the repository of the soul? Who formed the lungs like a pipe? None, but the Almighty God, who made all things." This splendid appeal is so evidently a paraphrase of David's fine hints, that it cannot be fairly ascribed to any heathen philosopher, who had not seen them, or at least heard of them. Indeed, it cannot be traced back to merely heathen times, nor beyond the Sybilline oracles, in the second century, when the Gnostics were in the habit of putting some Scriptural truths into fabulous lips, as well as the "new wine into old bottles." The argument, however, is good, whoever was the author of it. Sir Charles Bell, also, was not ashamed to take his stand, either as a student or as a demonstrator of Divine wisdom, upon the anatomy of the human *hand* alone. And there is not an insect nor a leaf can be ex-

amined, without its leaving the conviction on the mind, that an All-wise God made it. It is as true, *down* amongst the minutiæ of creation, as *up* amongst its grandest orbs and brightest intellects, that "in wisdom" God has "made them all." We, especially, are "fearfully and wonderfully made," and, therefore, it is both shameful and sinful not to consider our own frame. Every one may, and ought to consider its mechanism enough to be able to sing with the understanding and the heart,—

> "Strange, that a harp of thousand strings
> Should keep in tune so long!"

and we ought to acquaint ourselves so far with the body, that we should be as much afraid and unwilling to derange or weaken its organisation by any excess or imprudence, as we would to turn the stars *out* of "their courses," or to disturb the flow of the tides; for, remember, it is a *redeemed* body as well as a wonderfully made one, and is claimed by God as a "living sacrifice" now, in order that it may be a "glorious body" eternally. Its destined immortality is the grand reason of its wise mechanism. It ought, therefore, to be held just as *sacred* as the soul; for it is the work of the same hand, and the purchase of the same blood! Will you not, then, look for that wisdom in it, which led God to create it, and Christ to redeem it, and the Holy Spirit to make it His temple?

It is not necessary in order to this, to study the anatomy of the body or the nature of the mind deeply. There is enough of wisdom on the very surface of both to win and reward attention. For, how all the senses are fitted to discern and enjoy the qualities of everything around us; how the mind can judge of these qualities, of colour, form, fragrance, taste, and size, without being

distracted by their variety, or misled by their resemblances; and how wisely the wonderful union between soul and body is arranged; matter and spirit blend over all the human frame, and in their mutual action melt into each other as gently as the colours of the rainbow, or the prismatic rays of light.

Well might *Galen*, the great physiologist of antiquity, like Paley, take his stand upon the human frame, and say of those who denied the wisdom of God in it, "But were I to spend more words on such *cattle*, reasonable men might blame me for desecrating my work, which I regard as a religious hymn to the Creator."

But the wisdom of God is worthy of Himself, and thus of our attention, in all the forms of both animal and vegetable life. It will not, however, gain much *devotional* notice unless you rouse your curiosity by the question, "What kind and degree of interest did the God who made me, take in making animals and plants?" It is only when we are curious about God's *reasons* for making so many creatures and things, that we consider them at all with care. Weeds, and insects, and reptiles, and vermin, we naturally regard as annoyances, if not as real evils also; and thus would think the earth well rid of them. But they are as wise and useful in their relative place, in the economy of nature, as the plants and animals we admire and value most. Insects and reptiles, annoying as they are to both man and beast, are to the earth at large, what thunder and lightning are to the air, *purifying* powers that consume or refine the *refuse* of all corruptible things, and thus prevent the ground from becoming a putrid and pestilential mass.

In like manner, whatever inconvenience *weeds* occasion,

there is never one too many, whilst the ground is not occupied by better plants. Planted it must be, if arable, with something vegetable; for, otherwise, the air would be unwholesome. The *juices* of the earth, if not refined and confined in plants, would keep it steaming like a boiling cauldron. The leaves of the vegetable kingdom are thus the lungs by which the atmosphere is purified and kept salubrious.

There is, indeed, a weighty sense in which weeds, thorns, and briars are marks of Divine displeasure, or of the primeval curse incurred by sin. He reads nature with but one eye who does not see upon the face of the earth, legibly, the handwriting, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake;" for even where it is most a garden, its perpetual tendency is to throw up weeds. But still there is wisdom even in this curse, for it both necessitates and stimulates industry. Man must work, or want; and "the sweat of his brow" is as essential to his health as food is to his life. In this point of view, there is wisdom also in the prevalence of poisonous serpents and wild beasts in both forests and wildernesses. They are, indeed, fearful scourges to savage and uncivilised man; but they are evidently intended to rouse his ingenuity as well as his fears, and to drive him from "the dens and caves of the earth" into a settled and secure home. It was not, therefore, in order to endanger or annoy "the dwellers in the wilderness" that God placed ferocious and venomous creatures in its jungles and sands, but in order to keep men together for mutual defence, and thus compel them to turn the wilderness into a fruitful field, and the forest into a garden. Yes, and but for the vermin that haunt civilisation itself, and tend to swarm in the mansion as well as in the cottage,

cleanliness would be far less a habit or a principle than it now is at home; and thus both health and comfort would be materially lessened were there no noxious insects that compelled perpetual watching.

In this manner the wisdom of God might be vindicated, even where it is least conspicuous at first sight, for He has "made nothing in vain." Manifold and thus dissimilar as His works are, He has made them "all in wisdom." Considered as parts of a great whole, or of a system in which "all things work together for good," the volcanic mountains breathing fire and belching lava, but thus rendering earthquakes slight or seldom, are as wise as the ranges of mountains that balance the seas on the globe and attract and rend the rain-clouds of the sky. The storms that sweep the ocean, and thus by shaking up its waters from their channels purify them, are as wise as the saltness that keeps the sea salubrious. The winds, thunders, and lightning, that shatter, as it were, the vault of heaven, as well as shake the earth, are as wise as the rain and the dew, for they give a healthy tone to the air, and thus cheer all nature. Even "the pestilence that walketh in darkness," destroying thousands on the right hand and the left, is not *unwise* in our world, where national vices, if not thus awfully scourged now and then, would overrun society, and constantly destroy far more than plagues cut off. True, they cut off some of the virtuous as well as the vicious, but that does not derogate from the wisdom of pestilence; for, as a warning, it both reclaims many of the bad and makes the good better, as well as creates an awe of Divine judgments in the mind of the young, which improves the rising generation. Josephus says that such *was the rampant* and reckless vice of Jerusalem in all

forms, that had not the city been suddenly destroyed, the Jews would soon have destroyed each other. We mistake, therefore, when we imagine that any sweeping scourge of judicial Providence is unwise. The most fatal, prevents far greater evils than it inflicts. Our nation is, indeed, far less religious or moral than might be expected from its many national mercies and privileges; but had not pestilence visited it, and were not that "destroying angel" remembered, or not brought to remembrance by his flaming sword in other lands, Britain would be far worse than it is.

It is very easy, and not unnatural, to feel shocked at such terrific scourges as pestilence or famine; but there are more tremendous evils than either. Tyranny and superstition, intemperance and licentiousness, have slain more than both, although by a slower process; and both have helped not a little to make kings and priests feel that they were "but men," by putting them "in fear" for themselves. So, also, Satanic influence, although all its tendencies are "only evil, and that continually," is a wise permission in a world where sin is not naturally dreaded nor salvation prized. At first sight, indeed, it seems both unwise and unkind to let in upon mankind, who are only too prone to rebel against God, a tempter to rebellion. This seems fanning the flame of our natural enmity against God and holiness. But Satan is not let in under a *mask*, nor in a false character. Both his character and doom are depicted in the Bible, and all his stratagems pointed out to us; and thus he stands before us in its light, an awful proof that sin is no trifle, and hell no fiction, and salvation no debt owing by God to sinners. In this point of view it would be impossible to name any

standing warning against sin *wiser* than the revealed agency and fate of Satan and his angels, for no one can look at their lot, and think lightly of either sin or salvation.

But it is said, If all evils have thus some antidote, or may be turned to some good account, would not the *prevention* of evil, natural and moral, have been wiser than either counteracting or curing it? Now, in answer to this question, I can only say, that the ALL-WISE God did not *think* so. He thought it wiser, and thus more worthy of all His glorious perfections, to *cure* sin by the blood of His Son, and the grace of His Spirit, than to prevent sin. This being the revealed fact, it must be *foolish* to talk or think about a state of things in which sin would be a natural impossibility. Sinning will, indeed, become a *moral* impossibility in heaven, and that for ever; but not by forcible prevention even there, nor at any period of eternity. All in heaven, whether saints or angels, will

"Never, never sin:"

but not one of them will be restrained from sinning, nor upheld in holiness, by *physical* power; but all by the solemn fact, that the Lamb in the midst of the throne will never be slain again; and by the sublime fact, that both will be for ever kept "like Him," because they will for ever "see Him as He is," or as a Lamb that has been slain for sin! Thus all the preventing power will be *mediatorial*, as well as moral, for ever.

Now this is a kind of influence under which neither our first parents nor angels were placed when they were created. Both had moral and immortal reasons against sinning, but neither had mediatorial reasons. As, therefore, neither Eden nor heaven could prevent sin by their

own sweet influence, and as its eternal prevention in heaven, after the fall of Satan and his angels, became infinitely desirable, was it not manifold and glorious wisdom on the part of God, to make sure of universal and everlasting holiness there, by a sacrifice that can never be repeated nor paralleled, nor yet lose its power over any pure spirit in the universe? He saw that *falling* or rebellion might go on for ever in all worlds, under mere law, however good, and in spite of threatenings, however awful; and as He loved holiness and happiness alike, He put the sceptre of authority into the hands of His slain Lamb, and thus rendered it as magnetic in the moral heavens as the sun is to the planets, or the centre of gravity to the whole creation.

But this subject will come up again soon. In the meantime, just consider how foolish it is to reckon anything *unwise* in the arrangements of a world that God has made a nursery for heaven. Our present ease and comfort are not neglected by God; but they form the least part of His grand and gracious object. His design is to train us for an eternity in His own presence and service; and as we are anything but *willing* to set our hearts upon the glory we wish for in heaven, nothing could be more unwise than the removal of those natural evils from the world which compel us to feel that it is "not our rest," and to remember that sin has disfigured it. I am neither insensible nor indifferent to pain and privation. I feel as well as see some *mystery* even in the trials of both life and godliness. But when I look at them as they bear upon "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light," I must say,

> "Wisdom in all the mystery shines,
> *And* shines in Jesu's face,"

as He looks down from the throne, saying, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." "My peace give I unto you." For I know what His peace in this world was. It was peace under trials; not an exemption from them.

But now it is time to trace the wisdom of God in redemption more fully; and were I *sermonising*, or writing systematic theology, I would set myself to prove that God redeems without relaxing His justice; and pardons, without tolerating sin; and renews, without setting aside free-agency, or sanctioning indolence. All this displays the most perfect wisdom. But I have not room for such reasonings. I fall back, therefore, upon the wisdom of sending redemption to our world, in a way that assures all worlds, that Christ having died once, will die no more; and thus that there will be "no more sacrifice for sin." This has put the unfallen universe upon their *mettle*, and will keep them steady,

"Whilst immortality endures."

Let us not forget, however, whilst admiring the wisdom of this grand measure, that it would not have been *unwise*, nor unfair, on the part of God, had He provided no Redeemer for man, or given angels no confirmation by Christ. We did not *deserve* such a Saviour, nor could they *demand* such a head. We might have been justly left under our sins, and unfallen spirits to their own strength. But as "God is love," and thus loves to be loved, and delights in promoting holy happiness throughout the universe, He could have done nothing *wiser* than confide His dearest wish to the mediatorial influence of His crucified Son. Accordingly, there was no *second* fall of angels after the Son was appointed the mediator of the *covenant*; and since He took His place, as the Lamb slain

in the midst of the throne, saints and angels have vied in both allegiance and gratitude.

And, on earth, what is it that wins the heart of any man or woman to love God and holiness supremely; or that weans the heart from the undue love of the things that are seen and temporal? Not any display of either the goodness or the wisdom of God, in creation or providence. It is the cords of redeeming love that draw hearts away from earthly things as a portion, and bind them to God and heaven. Well, therefore, might Paul say, "Christ, the *wisdom* of God!" And well may we regard Him as such; for no other display of Divine wisdom, even when it entrances the soul with wonder, and tunes it to rapture, transforms it at all into the Divine image. Neither the mechanics, the organisations, nor the chemistry of nature, manifold and amazing as their wisdom is, melt the heart into filial love, or humble penitence, apart from the cross. Who knew them better, or upon a vaster scale, than Laplace, Lamarck, Geoffroy, and Humboldt?—Not Newton, Cuvier, nor Herschel. But, who can trace in the former anything like love to God, or sympathy with either the religious awe or admiration of the latter philosophers? M. Comte, not the inferior of either class, in either intellect or eloquence, avows himself an Atheist, and coolly says, that the heavens declare the glory of no one but Newton, Kepler, and such men!—PHIL. POSITIVE.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD.

"If we go to fathom the depths of omnipotence we shall lose ourselves in darkness and perplexities: therefore, letting alone all the subtilities of absolute impossibilities, and of an independent nature of things, and of the sustentation of existence in substances, let us fix our view upon a prospect we can clearly discern. Let us consider God giving existence to substances, solidity to matter, perception to spirit, and understanding to man; limiting the ocean, spreading out the earth as a garment, and stretching forth the vast expanse of heaven; rolling the planets in their orbits, fixing the golden sun, and appointing the stars their stations; causing gravitation between large bodies, cohesion between small, elasticity in air and ether; giving motion to the wheels of fortune, stability to the laws of nature, and directing both their certain courses: commanding the issues of life and death, and having the future condition of our spirits at His disposal; the contemplation of these will give us the fullest idea of omnipotence that we are capable of taking."—TUCKER'S LIGHT OF NATURE.

"We can discern POWER without difficulty, where we cannot always trace design, or wisdom, or goodness. Power requires little more than the exercise of observation; the others call for much knowledge, both moral and physical, and often for acute and careful reasoning."—MACCULLOCH.

"Essence and power in God are the same. His essence being infinite, His power also must be so."—THEOPH. GALE.

"God's will is of *itself* operative. We may not place in Him any other executive power, for if anything more were required, it would follow that the Divine will is not self-sufficient."—BRADWARDINE.

No perfection of Jehovah is more frequently mentioned or celebrated in the Holy Scriptures than His power. Most of His names also express or imply His infinite power. The name "Almighty" occurs, I think, *seventy* times in the Bible. Revelation opens and closes with distinct assertions and celebrations of His omnipotence.

This is neither accident nor needless repetition. Everything depends upon the power of God being both infinite and unchangeable. Any lack or loss of power on His part, would limit the exercise of all His other perfections, natural and moral. However much, therefore, we *dread* Divine power, when we think of it as omnipotent to crush or cross our purposes, and to punish our sins, yet, could not the power of God do that, we could not be sure that it could either save or protect us. Omnipotence *armed* against sin and folly is, indeed, an awful consideration; but a powerless, or but weak God, would be a more terrible fact, as well as involve all the fatal consequences that guilt fears from omnipotence.

Besides, however disagreeable it may be now to feel that we are in the grasp of an omnipotent hand, which we can neither resist nor evade; and however we may see how we could *get on* in this world, could we do as we like, or bend all things to our own will, yet we shall soon be in a world where we can control nothing, resist nothing, nor even tell ourselves what it would be safe or wise to do there. Whilst the soul is in the body, and both here, we have some idea of what we can do, and how we can live, and of what is best for this world; but the moment we realise the soul "out of the body," we feel that we must be as ignorant, weak, and helpless, as a new-born infant; or utterly incapable of knowing what to do or think as we enter eternity; unless, as in the case of that infant, there be some one waiting to watch over us. We cannot do as we like then, nor tell what it would be best to do there. We can summon neither saint nor angel to meet us or help us. Nothing but omnipotence can help us then; for there, neither saint nor angel dare move, but by Divine permission; and that

will not be granted for the guardianship or guidance of any spirit who has lived only for this world, and for its own gratification. However, therefore, any man may look big, or wise, or strong now, amidst the pressure of circumstances, and in relation to his own affairs, it is impossible to conceive of a more pitiably *helpless thing* than he will be when he finds himself out of the body and the world at once! Then, and there, any man, could he lay hold upon omnipotence for help, would gratefully sing, "Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" Now, the reign of omnipotence here, as it threatens sin, and defeats ambition, and blasts worldly prospects, in spite of both strength and prudence, is hated or arraigned; but on the brink of eternity, it would be greedily and gladly caught at by all who now dislike it, were it at all a refuge then.

This is one line of thought well calculated to *alarm* us at our natural aversion to be at the will, and in the grasp of omnipotence now. But it will soften and conciliate our prejudices against being thus in God's power, if we consider calmly how desirable it is that He should be infinitely powerful. For, whilst nothing is so terrible as to have omnipotence against us, it need not be our enemy. It may be our best friend. Indeed it reigns now, in order to be our refuge in both worlds. Thus, although tremendous power, it is in good hands, and for gracious purposes. I love to be *in* "the mighty hand of God," although not to be "*under*" it; and even when "under His mighty hand" by affliction, I prefer that to being left under the dominion of either sin or the world. And you will judge thus also, if you set yourself to weigh the *desirableness* of omnipotence in the Divine nature and character.

Now, exactly as any being is excellent, it is desirable that he should be powerful, and that his power should be as lasting as his moral excellence. Wisdom to plan well, without power to execute, is useless. Even goodness, without power, can do no good to others. Power of any kind, if very great, is indeed a dangerous thing, even in the best human hands, and is in general abused more or less. Few make a good use of great power—political, ecclesiastical, commercial, or mental. Still, no great good has ever been done to society without great power of some kind. What a pity, as well as loss, it would have been, had the inventor of steam power been too poor to apply it; or the discoverer of vaccination too uninfluential to bring it into notice! In what darkness the world would have been, had the inventor of printing been unable to fit up presses, or to found type enough to demonstrate the worth of the art! And, had not Luther had the power to give burning utterance, by both his tongue and pen, to the deep convictions of his daring spirit, the Reformation would have been a failure in Germany.

Apply this hint to omnipotence. We now see much wisdom and goodness in creation; and thus know what vast and valuable plans were in the Eternal Mind, when God,

> "Deep sunk in His unfathom'd Essence,
> View'd the forms of uncreated things."

What a pity and loss it would have been, therefore, had He been unable to carry these glorious plans into effect, or unequal to produce what He so wisely designed! "The morning stars," instead of "singing together," would have wept together at creation, had there been an orb of it too heavy for the hand of God to launch, or to link on with

the rest; or a motion of it too swift or slow, to harmonise with

"The music of the spheres."

What cause for deep regret, had God been too weak to "weigh the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance;" or to pile and place them so as to counterpoise the seas, and beautify the earth, and attract the clouds? So also, had not Divine power been just as able to work wonders in *small* as well as in great things, the earth would neither have been verdant with herbs, nor variegated with flowers, nor watered with rivulets, nor vocal with birds. All that is beautiful in nature was originally a beautiful *idea* in the mind of God; and thus it all depended upon His power for actual being. In a word, it is impossible to survey creation, and not rejoice in omnipotence, and glory in the permanence of its power; for could it not *preserve* what it created, vegetation might die on the earth, and the stars of heaven fall or burn out.

But we are more deeply interested in the omnipotence of God, than just for the temporal good it has thus produced and prolonged. We are guilty; and were not mercy as "mighty to save," as justice is to punish, we must perish. We are depraved; and were not grace as powerful to renew and sanctify, as mercy is to pardon, even mercy could not fit us for heaven. Were not Divine holiness omnipotent, it could not multiply nor restore its own image upon fallen souls; for the soul is averse to sanctification. Even Divine love, if not omnipotent, could never have carried its point in winning the human heart, nor in harmonising all the claims of love and justice, with the exercise of rich mercy *and free* grace to sinners.

These assertions are not made here as matter of course, nor as theological forms of speech; but as appeals to both sober and solemn facts. You cannot look into your own heart closely without feeling that you cannot *make* it love either God or holiness as heaven requires, or even as conscience tells you it ought to love them. If you have any concern about *meetness* for heaven, you feel at this moment that no power less than Divine power could *perfect* your spirit for an eternity of glory. If you love heaven at all, you ought to love Omnipotence much; for you are *undone* unless the power of God work mightily in you! You can no more raise your spirit to the gates of heaven when you die, nor join it to "the spirits of the just made perfect," than you can carry your body within the veil of eternity then. You can no more place your spirit where you like before the throne, nor with those you wish to be near, than the sun, when created, could have lifted itself into the centre of the solar system; yea, no more than *Satan* can resume his original place in heaven!

No man can fix or force himself amongst the stars in the firmament of glory by his own power, when his spirit is out of his body, any more than the stars of the sky lifted themselves from chaos, or chose their own orbits in the heavens. Now as God has not promised to put forth His power to glorify at death, any one who lives without seeking His sanctifying power, how dear His omnipotence ought to be to you now!

Besides, we are far more dependent, even now, upon Divine power than we usually think. We are anything but masters of our spirit whilst it is in the body. Such a weight of woe, or weakness, may come over it as to render it both helpless and hopeless. It is capable of either

breaking or burning so, that Omnipotence alone could mend its springs or calm its rage. A *paroxysm* of any of the passions can upset all its powers. Paul knew this, and felt that he was ministering to the temporal as well as the eternal welfare of mankind, when he told them how "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding," could keep both their "HEARTS AND MINDS, through Christ Jesus." Philip. iv. 7.

Nor is this all. For what is your life but a vapour you have no power to keep from exhaling in a moment? And what is your health, if the power of God leave it to itself, but a tone that any wind may relax, or any accident paralyse for ever? So, also, however much your affairs or designs may seem in your own hands, or within your own power to manage well, there are points in them and around them that you can neither control nor guard. Their very dependence upon your own power is their chief peril, because you have no power to prolong your life, health, or reason, even one moment, apart from the will of God; and what hold can any man have upon the Divine will for time, who cares but little about it for eternity?

Thus, in every point of view, we are deeply interested in the fact, that God is "able to do exceeding abundantly for us, above all we can ask or think." Any power of any kind that we have, depends wholly upon His infinite power. And then, there is no danger whatever of God *abusing* His power. All His moral perfections are pledges to us that the Omnipotence that can do all things will "do all things well." This is the signet-ring on "the mighty hand of God," and the "rainbow round about the throne" of the Omnipotent. Man is prone to abuse power because his *passions* are stronger than his principles, and because he

can be tempted by evil; but God can have no temptation to make any wrong use or useless display of His power. The very fact that "nothing is impossible to God," is itself a pledge that He will do nothing improper. So, also, is the fact that He could *gain* nothing by any unfair or undue stretch of His power, nor *lose* anything by doing all things well. In a word, whilst God is all-perfect, He cannot be too powerful.

So far these remarks proceed upon the supposition that the omnipotence of God is well known and deeply felt by us. And it is not a light nor small matter to have a settled conviction that there is nothing "impossible" to God, or that He can do all things; for this, however obvious to us, has been both doubted and denied by some heathen philosophers. Indeed, it was long believed that "out of nothing nothing could be made;" or that the matter of which all things were made was itself eternal or self-existent. Now, although we can smile at this absurdity, of an effect without a First Cause, the wisdom of the ancient world was glad to wink at it, in order to get over the tremendous difficulty of conceiving how the universe, or anything whatever, could be created out of nothing, even by God. And the Power that could do this *is* incomprehensible to us, even now that revelation has declared that "the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Heb. xi. 3. But although we cannot fully comprehend the creative fiat, as it gave being and beauty to the vast universe by a word, we can both admire and adore the Creator, and even imagine how that omnific word *told* upon the blank spaces of infinity, and took *effect* upon nonentity at once.

You may form some conception of this if you will sup-

pose all the present means of *lighting* the streets, and roads, and houses of the world, when the moon does not shine nor the stars show themselves, exhausted. This is not an impossibility in all senses. What, then, would be the surprise and delight of the world when such a crisis came, and whilst dreading the wane of the moon, were there to appear overhead, just as the last candle and lamp went out, myriads of lovely lights, created in a moment, and fixed in that atmosphere where now nothing is to be seen but a soaring bird or a floating cloud? The sudden creation of the pillar of fire at the Red Sea, as "light by night," when the waves and the wilderness were dark, could hardly have delighted the Jews so much as this would amaze and please us. Well, just so—but upon an infinitely grander scale—was the scene witnessed by the angelic "morning stars," when the vacant and dark depths of immensity burst into a splendid universe,

> "As yonder spheres sublime
> Peal'd their first anthems to the march of time."

Until then the angels of God had seen His omnipotence displayed only in their own wonderful form and faculties, and in the glories of the temple and throne where they worshipped, or in the space and splendour of "the heaven of heavens;" but then all that infinite void which from eternity had emitted no sound, and beamed no ray, and embosomed no life, and upon which they had looked out as we do upon "thick darkness," became brilliant, and vocal, and vital at the command of God, and by the act of His Son: for by Him the Father "made the worlds," and "by Him were all things created, visible and invisible." Heb. i. 2; Col. i. 10.

This scene must have been to angels then, what a crea-

tion, similar in extent and grandeur, would be to us now, were we placed at the uttermost verge of the present universe, and able to see from that point at a glance another universe arise and radiate at a word, and in a moment roll in harmony with all the existing worlds.

These glimpses at the *acting* power of Omnipotence, will enable us to take a *calm* if not a clear view of its working when creation began. And this is of some importance to a Christian, whether he has, or has not, had his head confused by reading conflicting *human* theories of the origin and order of our own world's creation. Now, of our world alone is it said by God, that it was created in a *chaotic* state, or "without form and void, standing out of the water and in the water." This is not said of any other worlds, visible or invisible, in the universe. Such being the Scriptural fact, and science being unable to say even one warranted word about the state of other worlds at their birth, a Christian is bound, I submit, to think of the creation of the universe at large agreeably to the sublime oracles,—"Jehovah spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast."

Philosophy, so far as I can understand it, *disturbs* all the calm majesty and sweet music of Omnipotence working by a word, with gratuitous storms, projections, convulsions, volcanoes, and chaotic uproar; as if the Creator, instead of calmly *willing* the universe into being and beauty, had broken the silence of eternity by "the *thunder* of His power," and the repose of Infinity by terrific elemental wars. But, although our globe bears marks of such a chaos and of many a convulsion, when science applies to its strange aspects the laws by which similar phenomena occur now, there is no necessity for *generalising* the process,

or for concluding that all worlds were born in tempests, and cradled in fires, and rocked by whirlwinds, and rent by earthquakes and floods, like that chaos which Milton described as

> "Outrageous as a sea, dark, wasteful, wild,
> Up from the bottom turn'd by furious winds
> And surging waves, as mountains, to assault
> Heaven's heights, and with the centre mix the pole."

Weighty and valid *moral* reasons can be assigned for "the earth being without form, and void," at first; and for "darkness being on the face of the deep," until the SPIRIT moved upon the waters, and God said, "Let there be light;" but, except to humour a handful of modern geologists and astronomers, who prefer the *slow* processes of what they call nature to that word which "runneth very swiftly," no good reason can be assigned for supposing that all worlds underwent the same process as the earth. The earth has been, almost from its birth, and is still, a world in *arms* against God and holiness; and, therefore, might not unfairly nor unnaturally be expected to be about as *strange* in its aspects, as its inhabitants are in their character. But as we know of no such moral world as our own, amongst all the myriads that gem immensity, and circulate in brightness around the throne of God, it is, surely, not very philosophic, to judge from their remote and intangible *atmospheres*, what was their elementary origin, or the process of their formation. For as all philosophy, not sceptical, admits that the plan of the whole universe, in all its details, as well as harmonies, was distinctly present in the Eternal Mind before creation began, it cannot be unphilosophical to think that the worlds were made as *calmly* as they were planned, and shone out at *once* in the spaces of infinity as bright and beautiful as

they now shine down upon us, when the midnight sky is clear, or the moon fading. This, to say the least, is more *like* the Eternal Mind, than convulsions and catastrophes, or even than the slow processes of chemistry.

Judge for yourself. We have gone back, in thought, into the solitude and silence of the past eternity, when everything that now exists was but a vital *idea*, or design, in the bosom of God, and of God, as both light and love! and then, to a certainty, the whole sum of these ideas dwelt there as calmly as clearly. Now as they were deliberately formed, and complacently cherished by God,—and as they were to be carried into effect, as designs, by the Son of God and the Spirit of God,—what so *like* the Godhead as that, instead of being either terrifically or slowly *realised*, they took their forms and places in the bosom of infinity, as calmly and orderly and instantaneously, as they originally sprung up in the bosom of Deity?

It is, remember, the omnipotence of the *revealed* Jehovah, who is both love and light, that I am trying to illustrate; and not that of the *cold* abstraction which deists and semi-deists call the First Cause, or the Author of Nature. Their researches are amongst the dark places of the earth, and the distant places of the sky, not in the Bible; and as their conclusions are drawn from experiments which "put them into a *heat*," or benumb them with cold, or explode in smoke and flame around them, or go on but very slowly, even when they go on well; they seem to transfer their own *bustle* to creative power, and to make the universe shake and smoke, because their own laboratories do so at times, and their mines often.

In taking this *tranquil* view of creation at large, I do not forget that God hurries on none of His works, nor

think that there would have been any less omnipotence displayed, had all worlds been as chaotic at first as the earth was. Indeed, to "the natural mind," omnipotence seems greatest when ruling the tempestuous and tremendous energies of nature. But, upon the whole, it is most God-like when contemplated as executing the vast plans of infinite wisdom, with infinite ease and composure.

But it is now time to vary the view of Divine power, in order that we may think for devotional and holy purposes, and remember with grateful feelings, that

> "The voice which rolls the stars along,
> Speaks all the promises;"

and that He "by whom God made the world," was "made flesh" in our world, and a propitiation for its sins. Now in this there was a display of omnipotence, which, although it does not strike the *senses*, like a universe unfolding in the depths of space, whether in glory or gloom, yet appeals more to the *heart* than either the vastness or the variety of all the other works of God. There is more than sublime poetry in the words,

> "God in the person of His Son
> Has all His mightiest works outdone."

It is sober fact, and both sound and profound philosophy. For, what is any combination of the elements, upon any scale, great or small, compared with the *union* of the Divine and human nature in the person of Emmanuel; seeing that "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"? What is any energy of nature, whether as a law or a power, and however it may touch or control orbs and atoms alike, all over the universe, compared with the direct influence which the Saviour can and does exert over all *spirits* in all worlds? Neither light, nor electricity, nor

gravitation, can *govern* the universe of mind, nor mould even one mind to any moral or rational purpose. But He has power over both "all flesh," and all spirits, and by a word, or a wish, can bend and bind them all, as with invisible chains, to His own will, just as the centre of gravity links and leads the whole retinue of stars, suns, and worlds "in their courses." There is certainly nothing in nature so wonderful as light. Even its undulation is a perfect mystery. It is for ever flowing from the sun, and never seen returning, and yet its fountain never exhausts nor diminishes; nor do its waves stop, or vary, or clash, although for ever crossed by the streaming light of hundreds of millions of suns and stars. This is, perhaps, the best emblem that nature can furnish of the "*healing*" light of the Sun of Righteousness, or of the "*virtue*" that emanates from the atoning merits of the Saviour; which is for ever flowing, and yet never lessening; and although touching always every one of the Divine perfections and purposes, as it saves the guilty, never clashes with or eclipses one of them, even when "a nation is born in a day," or when saving the very chief of sinners! But still, material light (if, indeed, light be material!), wonderful, and useful, and cheering as it is to the spirits, as well as to the eye, is only a very imperfect emblem of the healing beams of the Sun of Righteousness, as they soothe and sanctify the heart; for neither sunlight, moonlight, nor starlight, even when sweetest, has any *moral* influence, apart from Divine light, to save or sanctify. Were you or I clothed with light as with a garment, or even like the Apocalyptic woman, "clothed with the sun, and had the moon under our feet, and a crown of twelve stars on our head," they could not light us to heaven, even if we had,

like her, "the wings of a great eagle" to soar with; unless, like her, we were also "espoused to Christ," and kept "the commandments of God." Rev. xii.

In writing thus, nothing is farther from my intention than to lessen at all in your estimation, the displays of omnipotence in nature. I myself am, perhaps, too fond of them, in both their lovely and awful forms, and as they alternately awe and delight. But if it would argue a vulgar taste, and betray a weak mind, not to be amazed nor struck by the wonders of creation, it argues *baseness*, as well as imbecility of some kind, not to feel that omnipotence is grandest, as well as loveliest, in both the person and work of the Saviour Himself. For, what is His personality? The extremes of mystery and simplicity, of majesty and gentleness, meet and blend in the Incarnate One. He is one in essence with the Creator, and one in elements with the creature; assimilated to the Immortal in all His perfections, and to the mortal in all His properties; identified with Deity in glory, and with humanity in weakness; capable of enjoying all the felicities of Godhead, and of sympathising with all the infirmities of childhood, and all the rational joys and sorrows of manhood. "Great," truly, "is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh!" yes, and in this way, or to this degree, God is manifested in no one, and in nothing else. There are wonderful combinations of matter and spirit, of mystery and utility, of sublimity and beauty, in other omnipotent formations; but omnipotence never combined in one Being, nor in all beings, such extremes of strength and weakness, or of glory and simplicity. The *infinite* loses none of its omnipresence, and humanity none of its *sympathies*, in the Saviour. He is man, without at all

lowering His Godhead; and God, without in the least deifying His manhood.

And then, all this union of the Divine and human nature in the person of Christ, was effected by omnipotence, in order that Christ might be the Saviour of this world, and the Conservator of all worlds; or that He might redeem man, and confirm all the unfallen intelligences in the universe. Is it not, therefore, infamous, when philosophy, which traces and demonstrates omnipotence in both orbs and atoms, worlds and worms, elements and insects, says nothing, and sees nothing, and thus cares nothing about a Saviour; who, beside being the Creator of "all things, visible and invisible," bled and died upon the cross for human redemption? Such philosophers may either wonder or sneer, as they will, at both the ignorance and insensibility of Christians in general, to the displays of infinite power in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath—and most Christians deserve to be blamed for not taking a livelier interest in the works of God—but that blame comes with an ill grace from either the scowling brow, or the scornful eye, or the laughing lip of men who study comets and animalculæ with more zeal and zest, than either the incarnation or the atonement of the Son of God. They have also only *themselves* to blame, for rendering the Church both too indifferent and jealous about their demonstrations of omnipotence; for, in general, she has seen them piled and paraded, either against the foundations of her eternal hopes, or as eclipsing rivals to her dearest comforts. No wonder, therefore, if "the Bride, the Lamb's wife," the Church purchased by the precious blood of Christ, should look shy, and even somewhat angry, at men who thus lightly esteem Him

who loved her, and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water, by the Word, that thus He might present her to Himself, and to His Father, and to all heaven at last, a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing! Why, even public *respect* for the enemies of the cross of Christ, is almost *treason* to Christ Himself. Angels would show them none.

But let not this rebuke be applied beyond its intended objects. The cross of Christ, as well as His incarnate person and spiritual character, has some firm and fervent friends amongst scientific men. Newton's piety, as well as his *Principia*, is adhered to by not a few of his best pupils. The rebuke itself, however, is neither ill-timed nor ill-deserved, now that some scientific men, and all sciolists, are puffing off natural philosophy as the regenerator or reformer of national morals, *without* the Bible, and *apart* from the Gospel. We have had "Vestiges of Creation," with hardly a *vestige* of the Creator in them; and been gravely invited to trace the origin of man to a lower source than Monboddo's monkeys—even to *tadpoles, and the larvæ of a worm!*

It is surely time to take our stand, when such theories can find acceptance; and to ask ourselves, How would the most perfect knowledge of all the mechanism, chemistry, and wonders of the universe, place and leave us, could we master it all? Now, little of it as I know, I frankly own myself better for it, and can well conceive what sublime pleasure flows through both the telescope and microscope, when their powers are high, and their field wide; for plants as well as planets, and infusoria as well as suns, are full of wonders; but even when they land the

mind upon the wisdom of God, they leave it utterly ignorant of all His *will !*—a condition both pitiable and appalling. I have often tried to seat myself in thought by the side of Schiller's Sage, and to share his pleasure, when

> "Within his silent chamber, casting circles
> Pregnant with meaning, sits the thoughtful sage,
> Creative mind compelling new results;—
> Testing the forces that inhere in matter,
> Proving the magnet's wondrous hate and love,
> Pursuing sound through air, the ray of light
> Through ether; still intent on finding laws
> Amidst all chance-like incongruities;
> Intent on making out the stable pole
> Amidst the flight of mere phenomena:"

but, whenever I have caught any portion of his delight, it has, even when sweetest and sublimest, brightened no aspect of eternity, and hushed no fear of the soul, until blended with the joy of salvation, as a good hope through grace. If there ever was a man in the world, to whom either the sight or insight of nature could bring home endearing views of God, *Alexander von Humboldt* would surely be that man; for never was nature seen with a finer vision, nor searched with a keener eye than his, nor looked at upon a grander scale; and yet he seems, even when most inspired by his recollections of the world's scenery, and by his conjectures about "the awful depths of space,—those wastes without a world," to be for ever fleeing "from the presence of the Lord," or trying to keep clear of all sense of it. Where the rapt reader expects a burst of adoration, he finds speculations about general laws, which bear not even the *name* of the LAWGIVER! The title of his great work, on the Physical Phenomena of the Universe, *Kosmos*, is borrowed from Pythagoras, who, he says, "was the first to employ it as synonymous with creation, or with the order and arrangement of the earth and the heavenly

bodies." To those who know Pythagoras, this acknowledgment is mortifying; for his philosophy, whatever else it be, is full of God. He was "the first," Tinnemann says, "who chose the name of philosopher." And he deserved it better than some of his modern admirers, so far as the recognition of a presiding Deity is concerned. Lactantius says, that he defined God as a pervading mind throughout all nature, from whom all creatures receive life. Justin Martyr gives him credit for believing the unity of God, and the speciality of the Divine government. Both Plutarch and Clemens Alexandrinus also give him equal credit for ascribing intelligence and direct agency to God.

I thus refer to Pythagoras, not so much because Humboldt quotes him, but because he took a lively interest in teaching young men to love their parents for "training them to worship the Deity." For this, and other benefits, he said, that they ought to esteem their parents as much as a dead man, if he raised him to life, would love him. So also he taught boys, that they should study to be worthy of the *love* of providence. Thus "the Samian comet," as Pythagoras was called, did not exorbitate beyond the sphere of moral government. He was the contemporary of Ezekiel; and, if he did not see the prophets of his time, he visited the lands that knew them, and caught more of their spirit than the men who now claim his mantle.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

"In opposition to all suspicions of unconscious negligence, and of sanguinary malignity, '*God is love.*' And do you not feel the *distinctiveness* of this designation? It is not an appellative, it is not an epithet, it is not a quality. It is not only His name and memorial. It is His nature! It is His being! It is Himself! Love is the crown out of which all His attributes, like costly gems, emit their varied though equal lustre; or, as the firmament where they shine as a glorious and constellated host."—DR. HAMILTON.

"All religious and pious feeling would cease, if love and benevolence were denied to belong to God."—CICERO, NAT. DEOR.

"LOVE is the real meaning of the glorious shekinah."—CABALIST LEX.

"GOD is love!" The brevity of this sweet assurance is sublime; and its emphatic meaning will be more obvious when you remember, that the love thus declared to be the essence of the Divine character is that principle which Paul denominates "charity," and describes thus: "Charity" (that is, love or benevolence) "suffereth long and is kind; envieth not; seeketh not her own; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity; never faileth." God is, therefore, called by John not merely benevolent, but BENEVOLENCE itself; that being the sum of His character, and the essence of His nature. This is affirming so much, that the confirmation of its truth must be interesting, and ought to be very ample.

Gladly, however, would I confine myself to the glorious

Gospel alone, for illustrations and proofs of the love of God, if the Gospel itself were the first mirror in which mankind contemplated this brightest and sweetest perfection of the God of our fathers. But it is not the first glass in which they look at His glory. It is not the point from which we set out, when we begin to think and judge of the God with whom we have to do. We all judge of Him, in the first instance, far more by His laws, demands, and threatenings, than from the gift of His Son, or the promise of His Spirit, or the prospect of eternal life; and thus we suspect or dislike God, long before we begin to study either His heart or character in "the face of Jesus;" although there only the brightness of His glory shines. Hence, the melancholy, but absolute necessity of assailing both the enmity and unbelief of the human mind, by all kinds of argument; rational as well as Scriptural, in order that no room may be left for either dislike or dread, and no excuse for indifference.

But, whilst I comply with this *dire* necessity, without either a grudge or an ill grace, I wish you and myself to feel, whenever we are pleased or struck by any *natural* proof of the love of God, that were we more *spiritual*, we should not require it to help out the demonstration which the cross of Christ furnishes, and the sceptre of Christ confirms. God Himself confines Himself to the worth of the Saviour and salvation, when proving to us that He is love. He never takes His stand by the side of any beauty or bounty of nature, when He says to us, "Herein is love!" or, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed!" His eye is upon the Lamb slain, and His hand pointing to Him, either as He hung on Calvary, or as He sits on the throne, whenever "God *commendeth* His love to

us." Yes, and accordingly, thus the eye and hand of both the apostles and prophets turn, when they set themselves to prove that God is love. Although, therefore, I can easily believe that even the sacred writers would not have interrupted either Paley or Brougham, much less Macul-loch, whilst proving the benevolence of God from the works of creation, I cannot but feel that both the prophets and apostles of the Lamb, and even all "the morning stars" that sang together over creation, would have *wept* on finding the proofs neither crowned nor completed by the wonders of redeeming love. Natural philosophers may look big or bland when they say to us that these wonders are beyond their province, and belong to theology; but not a man of them durst have looked Paul or Isaiah in the face and said so without blushing, had these ambassadors of Heaven looked them full in the face, and asked them in tones of either thunder or grief, why they dared to divide the hand of God, from the *heart* of God, or to separate *provinces* which He had joined?

I will neither retract nor qualify this honest burst of contempt for the *taste* of men, who can traverse the universe with zeal and zest, for traces of Divine goodness, as well as of wisdom, in the economy of nature, and yet pass by the Gospel as if it were unworthy of, or beneath their notice. The wiser they are in their *own* province, the more foolish they are in reference to that province in which angels "learn the manifold wisdom of God," and in which, through eternity, intellect will find its chief studies, and taste its noblest enjoyments, and genius its amplest scope. In the meantime, until angels tire of looking into the sufferings and glory of Christ, and until all the harps of heaven weary of the new song, "Worthy is the Lamb that

was slain for us," let no one, whatever be his taste or talents, who can love nature, and yet hate the Gospel, seem to you otherwise than infatuated. Weep over him, or for him; for a really great mind, although "not less than archangel ruined," is in *ruins*, whilst it has no keen sense of the greatness of salvation, and no kindling sympathies with the glories of the mediatorial cross and crown.

Acquaint yourselves, however, by all means, with every proof of Divine love, that science has collected and arranged from the beauties or bounties of nature; and that poetry has celebrated, or painting copied; but remember, whilst you admire, that God was loved, as "Love," before either the science or the taste existed, which now set up their own discoveries and conclusions as rivals to revelation, and substitutes for devotion. Neither patriarchs nor prophets, apostles nor martyrs, needed or waited for the help of natural philosophy, in order to convince them that "God is love." They believed this, when none of the elements were so tributary to man as they all are now, and whilst the earth itself was less fertile. The prospect of a Saviour and eternal life, tuned the harps of Judah, even when the church was "in the wilderness;" and the atonement of Christ made the Roman empire ring with the cry, "God so loved the world as to give His Son up to the death for us," even whilst prisons, racks, or flames, awaited the admirers of redeeming love. Thus God did not wait for any one of the Sciences to commend His love, before He claimed to be Love, and called for love; nor did any of His servants faint or falter in enforcing His claims, because none of them were naturalists, chemists, or astronomers. These remarks are not at all made, in order *to undervalue* science or art; but only to show that the

Divine benevolence *rests* its own truth upon grounds wholly independent of all human discoveries and abstract reasonings. And who that has a heart, not hardened by vice, nor inflated by vanity, can *wonder* at this? Who that had given an only and beloved *Son* as a ransom for enemies would rest the proof of his love to them on anything else he might do for them, whatever else he did? Who would even mix up, or name, with that sacrifice, any other gift or service he rendered? This is the principle upon which God claims to be "Love," and to be loved.

Besides, love is a matter of the *heart;* and thus it can only be won or awakened by something that comes direct from the heart of God, breathing and burning with touching lovingkindness, which admits of no doubt, and defies all comparison. Such is the "unspeakable gift" of His Son as a Saviour. God could not go beyond that, in commending His love to either the world or the Church. That demonstration of it was *infinite* in every sense; infinitely high, infinitely strong, infinitely sure, infinitely warm! Now, this can be said of nothing else, good or fair, in the universe. Nothing else brings home to the heart a *melting* or warming sense of the love of God except in connection with this. Whoever, indeed sees and feels from this, that God is love, will be forcibly reminded of that great and glorious fact, even to *tears* at times, by a simple wild flower, or by a sweet scene, or by a calm morning or evening in summer, or by a mother's tenderness, or by a father's smile, or even by the music and the fragrance of a rural landscape, or the soft beauty of a twinkling star. Anything *lovely* will send a spirit warmed with the love of Christ up to the very *top* of the Bethel ladder of the Gospel, as with angelic speed, to wonder and weep in all the joy of godly sorrow

over the paternal love of God. But apart from that, these things, however they soothe, or please, or soften the spirit, leave the heart as they found it, neither penitently humble, nor evangelically devotional.

With this mutual understanding, I have now no objection to argue the matter on *general* grounds, as DWIGHT did, only more briefly.

It is highly probable that God is love, or benevolence. The strong probability that He is so, is a rational conclusion from the absolute *independence* of God. Nothing can be more self-evident than that the Author of all creatures is "over all"—above them, and independent of them. He can control and dispose of them as He pleases, at all times, and in all places. God has, therefore, no motive whatever for being malevolent. He could gain nothing by such a disposition. He can lose nothing by benevolence. Unless, therefore, He feel and act without any reason, motive, or end, He cannot be malignant, for He has no temptation to be so. Now, as a malevolent disposition cannot be cherished on its *own* account, and in the case of God need not be chosen on any other account by Him, it is only rational and fair to conclude that God is love, because in that character He can gain and keep every object He wishes.

This truth may be argued from the perfect *happiness* of God. It was not to make Himself happy, nor to add unto His inherent blessedness, that He created the universe; but that, amongst other things, it might proclaim the perfection of His self-enjoyment, or of His essential happiness. By the vastness and variety, by the grandeur and beauty of the material creation, God says to all the intelligent creation, "Behold My happiness! it was perfect when

nothing existed but Myself: I created the universe magnificent, not only to show you what I could *do*, but also what I could do *without*, even from eternity!" The truth of this appeal is self-evident. Now, as God was happy from everlasting, and independent of all things, of course, nothing can impair that happiness. He has, therefore, no reason to be malevolent, in order to prolong its perfection or duration. These cannot be injured, and therefore He can have no motive to injure any one, seeing it could not benefit Himself in any way. Besides, from all that we know of malevolent feelings, they are imcompatible with happiness, and naturally embitter all true enjoyment, wherever they are indulged. To doubt, therefore, if God be benevolent, is to question His happiness; and against such an idea, the eternity which preceded creation and time enters its solemn refutation.

That God is love, or benevolence, is highly probable from the *omniscience* of God. Even with our limited foresight, we can see at a glance that a malevolent disposition would, if cherished, be equally fatal to our peace and reputation. We are at no loss to perceive how it would sink our character, and be a canker in our bosoms. It is proverbial with us that a malignant temper is its own punishment. Now if shortsighted creatures, with only the shadow of a character, can see this, how clearly must an omniscient God see,—how powerfully a holy God feel, that malevolence would be unworthy of His character, and useless, even were it not so, to all His purposes? He cannot, therefore, be malignant through ignorance, nor through mistake; and as He could gain nothing by it, but in fact lose His own esteem, and the esteem of all rational beings, He cannot be so at all.

This will appear from the *wisdom* of God. Wisdom in any being, is to pursue the best ends by the best means. Now God could not propose to Himself a higher nor a better end in governing the world, than His own glory. That is a wise end, and worthy to be pursued to the utmost through all eternity; it therefore deserves wise means to promote it. But, is malevolence wise? Not if benevolence can gain the end; not if love can secure the Divine glory. The triumphs of tyranny would be disgrace, not glory, to any one. As sure, therefore, as God will not *disgrace* Himself, so certainly He is love.

But this truth may be argued from *His omnipotence* also. Now this power can do all things, whatever principle it act from, and whatever feeling or motive influence it. Malice could not strengthen omnipotence, nor love weaken it. The Almighty, therefore, can have no temptation to be either a tyrant or a hard master. His hand could reach no farther, and do no more, under passion, than it can under love. Besides, we have seen that God, from His very nature as "a Spirit," loves to be loved. Now this, He would not love were He malignant; or, if He either did or could, it would be utterly in vain; for we instinctively *despise* the malicious and cruel. We cannot help doing so, however fear or the force of circumstances may keep us silent. Love cannot be forced. It must be won. Such is our nature. This is its chief *instinct*, as social. We have, therefore, in an essential and inseparable element of our own spirit, both a proof and pledge that God Himself is love.

This line of argument might be drawn out to any length, and made to encircle the whole round of the Divine perfections, until it was seen that each of them repels alike

all suspicion of the Divine character being either unjust or ungenerous.

We shall see by-and-by, that neither present sufferings, nor future punishments, are incompatible with perfect love; but, indeed, proofs of its perfection. In the meantime, it will prepare us to see this clearly, as well as to weigh the point calmly, if we glance first at the general condition of the earth, and of human affairs. Now, that condition, anomalous and chequered as it is, is yet in perfect harmony with perfect benevolence. For, what is real love? Not weak lenity to real vices or faults; nor undue indulgence of human wishes. It would have been anything but kindness to us, in childhood, had our parents winked at all our faults, or gratified all our wishes. We, indeed, thought it hard, if not harsh, then, to be either chastised or checked when we did wrong; and to be refused, when we had set our heart upon improper things. But we know better now than to blame our parents, or doubt their love, because they did so. Well, manhood is often as imprudent in judging of God's conduct, as childhood in judging of parental kindness; and needs as much at times, both checks and chastisements. Look, then, in this light, at the state of our world. It is either in a state of trial, or of punishment. But if it be one of *trial*, or probation, then, mankind are accountable and punishable for not loving God. But we have seen that no man *could* love God, were God not love.

If on the other hand this be a state of retribution, for not loving and serving God, then there is far *less* punishment inflicted now than strict justice requires. There is, indeed, much suffering in the world; but there would be nothing but misery were God unjust or cruel. Besides,

all suffering being intended either to prevent sin, or to check it, is itself, a proof of Divine love. Accordingly, it is a proverb of the Old Testament, and a first principle of the New, that "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." And nature, as well as revelation, shows that Divine love has provided many alleviations for the sufferings which Divine wisdom inflicts. For, almost every mineral, metal, vegetable, and animal, has some *medicinal* virtue that ministers to our healing or help under the ills of life. In no slight sense, "the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord;" or furnishes an antidote, in some degree, to all things but death. This also is at utter variance with the suspicion that God is unmerciful, and in full harmony with His revealed love.

But this is not all. The actual comforts and charms of life, under ordinary circumstances, are so many and so sweet, that they are utterly *unaccountable*, on the supposition that God is either a harsh or hard master. We may say or think, whilst they last, that "they do not amount to much at the very best." But let them be threatened by death or disaster, we soon show how *dear* they are to us, by our strong reluctance to leave or lose them! Look also at the social affections of our nature; parental, conjugal, filial, and friendly. Would a cruel or unkind Creator have implanted them? Are they not *exponents* of His own heart, so far as they are either wise or warm for a good purpose?

Nor is this all. There have, indeed, been men so infatuated or infuriated by the crosses which their crimes brought and bound upon their shoulders, that they have called God a tyrant, and the world a prison. But, how do tyrants treat their victims? If not by immediate death,

or protracted torture, by shutting them up in dungeons that shut out light, and shut in foul vapours and vermin. But now, look out upon the surface of our world, clad in verdure and bloom, bearing fruit and breathing fragrance, swelling into mountain grandeur, or sweeping into level plains and sweet valleys,—is *this* earth a prison, or prison-like? Why, angels might linger in most of its groves and gardens, and even sing too on its hills and dales, either when the sun flushes them with brilliancy, or when the moon and stars shine upon their herbage and flowers. The six-winged seraphim *did* sing, "The earth is full of Thy glory," although they caught only a passing glimpse of it in their swift flight from heaven to the temple, "in the year that king Uzziah died," Isa. vi. 1. "God *is* love," let infidelity or misanthropy say what they will! They speak under a firmament whose lamps give them the lie; and in a landscape that both refutes and rebukes them.

But now, bear in mind that all this beneficence is bestowed by God, upon a world almost wholly unmindful of Him, and averse to both His service and salvation. He is, in general, last and least in most minds, even when His providential goodness is greatest. And yet, "the Father of mercies" remains the Father of mercies; renewing them every morning in detail, and repeating them every year in substance, even to His enemies, as well as to His heartless friends. Now, this would be demonstration that He is love, even if all who are not exactly heartless served Him well, and all who love Him lived only to His glory. Even then nothing but the essential benevolence of God could account for so much beneficence, as our world teems and shines with. And as mankind at large are and act,

were not God love He would leave both His enemies and His heartless friends destitute alike of comforts and conveniences. But He is unwilling that any should perish; and therefore He exercises a providence equally bountiful and wise, in order that there may be no real excuse for neglecting the great salvation.

The force of this general argument depends, remember, upon the solemn but sublime fact, that all providence has its chief bearings upon our eternal welfare; and that includes nothing less than a title and fitness to be for ever in heaven; a lot full of bliss and glory. But this prospect, glorious as it is, is not attractive to the natural mind. No one, indeed, dislikes it as a final state of being; but *present* happiness is far more prized. Providence must, therefore, in order to be either wise or kind, take care that our earthly comforts shall not be so many or great, as to divert us from our heavenly prospects. In fact, it would be *cruel* to creatures with our tendencies, to remove or prevent all temporal evils from our present lot. Nothing worse could befal our world whilst its moral state is so low, and its tastes so earthly, than the withdrawment of either suffering or vicissitude from it. At first sight, indeed, we are fascinated by the idea, that we should be *so* heavenly-minded were we free from all earthly cares, fears, and sorrows! But, what is the fact? Why, that those who have *least* of them are, in general, the most ungodly! Look at the lots in life, in which you think that you would live for eternity. Where is eternity more forgotten? True, there are solitary exceptions to this; but wherever there is much piety, where there is much wealth, there are *unseen* cares or sorrows, which are far more the cause of it than the visible affluence. Yes, indeed; it is some "thorn in

the flesh," or in the spirit, of wealthy Christians, that sets their hearts upon heaven; and not the roses of their lot.

Now, what think you of the objection so frequently and flippantly drawn from the evils of life, against the love of God? It is very easy to get up a sad list of pains, privations, cares, and sorrows; and then to ask, How can God be love, and yet allow so much misery to prevail in the world? Ask, in your turn, How He could be love if there were none, or but very little? What there is does not prevent the generality from taking up with earthly things as their chief good. And were there nothing to embitter or embarrass life, who would choose a heavenly portion, until death was inevitable? O, do justice to your own common sense on this point. It is for eternal glory that God is training you; and well may that require a kind of providential discipline, which would be quite unnecessary were we fit for heaven, or even fond of it; which, alas! we are not. Shall we, then, quarrel with temporal evils, that are all designed and adapted to set our hearts upon eternal good? Do let us take such views of the bliss and grandeur of a glorious eternity with God—where He is seen as He is, and shows all His works and wonders in the light which enshrines His throne—as shall make us even thankful for the trials of life. You *can* take such views. In order to do so, you have only to place yourself, in thought, by the side of any spirit in heaven whom you love; and, whatever were its trials here, you cannot imagine that it regrets them now that it triumphs in the "exceeding and eternal weight of glory" they worked out for it. You cannot place yourself, in thought, at the gates of death, where thousands of parting spirits are for ever passing within the veil of eternity, and even imagine that any of

them care much about any *difference* there was here in their earthly lot.

Besides, it is silly as well as sinful, to set up "the ills that flesh is heir to," as an argument against the love of God. This is as if the oak and cedar complained of the winds that strike their roots deeper into the earth; or the sea, of the storms that purify its waters; or the air, of electric shocks that disperse its vapours; for even in this world, minds that have never had to "endure hardness," nor to grapple with difficulties of any kind, are never good for much, and but seldom great at all.

But now, take equal care that no popular clamour or complaints against the laws of God blind you to the perfection of His love. The natural mind is, indeed, enmity against His law. But even the natural mind cannot prove that law to be either unnatural, or unreasonable, or unnecessary, as eternal law. Any man can get up a *tirade* against the laws of God as strict, rigid, and stern, when they clash with his own present pursuits and inclinations. But you never saw the man yet, who would like an eternity of any one of the pursuits that the Divine laws forbid. You may both challenge and defy any man to wish even that "one jot or tittle of law" were altered eternally! No man can think of eternal life without feeling that law is essential to its happiness. For, what commandment could be removed from either table of the law, without injury to all the bliss of heaven? The moment you realise living *for ever* with God and the glorified, you feel through all your soul, that any lack of love to either God or your neighbour, or any act of ingratitude or neglect towards them in heaven, would spoil your own happiness, even if it did not displease them. Yes, and let any man *define*

to himself, what he would like to be and do—"for ever and ever!"—when he has done with this world; and however he may dislike the law now, he would volunteer then to be a second Moses to it, or even to proclaim it anew with the Sinai trumpet, rather than pass into eternity with companions at liberty or inclined to break it. It is, therefore, pitiable, yea, contemptible, to hear law pleaded against love, as if it were incompatible with benevolence. Why, were law less strict, or even less stern, the love of God to man would be very doubtful, so far as this world is concerned. For, were mankind free to do with impunity whatever they like, neither life, property, nor reputation would have any real safeguard. God would, indeed, be what bad men now call Him, a *tyrant*, were He either to abrogate or alter His laws. Remember too, that even the worst men are the first to rage and resent when any of His laws are violated, to the injury of their rights.

But now, as to the *curse* of the law, or its eternal penal sanctions: here the clamour against Divine benevolence is loudest and bitterest. This is only what might be expected. It is, however, very unfair and unwise. For, what is the eternal curse against? Now, it is against not *loving* God. This is the sober and solemn fact. The curse runs, indeed, against all and every sin whatever; but just because they all tend to prevent love to God, and all spring from not loving Him. Thus their chief criminality is in their spirit or principle; which is enmity to God Himself. Now, no one will say that God *ought* to wink at hatred to His character and government. That would not be love to man; for if God did so, or let sin pass with impunity, man would be vile and violent upon a scale that would turn the world into a very hell. This is no conjecture.

Wherever men fear nothing future, they shrink from nothing bad when it suits their present humour. Murder was almost *sport* in France, whilst immortality was reckoned an idle dream.

But, to the point. What else could God do with the wicked than exclude them from heaven for ever? He cannot be expected to place them around His throne; for could He Himself bear the presence of His enemies, they would be quite out of their element amongst His friends. "But hell," it is said, "is so horrible! Why might they not be kept out of the place prepared for the devil and his angels?" Now hell does not shock me less than it does you. But still, I am glad there is only *one* hell in the universe, seeing there are so many worlds in that universe. To me, indeed, this is a weighty proof that "God is love," in both reference and relation to *all* worlds; for as He will not throw in the wicked from this world, into any of them, it is thus self-evident that His love holds the peace and purity of the universe at large just as sacred as the glory of heaven itself.

Look at this fact. It is not on the gates of heaven only that it is written, "Nothing that defileth shall enter." This wise and kind interdict extends to all worlds. Into hell only can the UNHOLY enter. This is a glorious fact to a benevolent mind! It brings before us the countless myriads of both sun-like and star-like worlds that crowd immensity, each crowned with heaven's own security against all risk of ever falling, like this world, or ever becoming a seat of sin and woe. Thus God's "banner" over them all "is love!" True, some of these worlds may not be inhabited yet. But that does not lessen the interest of *this fact*. For were the wicked sent to an empty world it

would soon be another hell by their presence and passions, and thus no relief to them; for the chief misery of the lost, like Satan's, must ever be the *sense* of loss; and its sound God will confine to one spot for ever, in order that all worlds may hear the same warning at once and alike.

I am not *evading* the question of the consistency of hell with the benevolence of God, by thus pleading the welfare of the universe, as involved in the imprisonment of the wicked. This may seem, indeed, a far-fetched argument to those who never trouble themselves to weigh what is implied in the exaltation of Christ to universal dominion, nor try to conceive how eternal holiness and harmony can be maintained. But to a mind that wants to see *how* eternal life can be perfect life, and immortality immutable in all its glory, the argument comes closely *home;* for, who could calculate upon everlasting perfection, were heaven open to intrusions from unholy beings? Besides, no one has any right to leave out of account the revealed fact, that all worlds are as much "put under" the mediatorial government of the Saviour, for their eternal preservation from sinning, as this world is for redemption from sin. They are thus all parts of His mediatorial reward and glory, which He will as much preserve as they are, as He will keep the church in heaven around His throne. He must, therefore, take effectual measures to secure the integrity and happiness of His entire kingdom. But, secured it could not be, on moral principles, were all the foul and felon spirits of either earth or hell at liberty to roam creation, and spread their poison from orb to orb. Such spirits may clamour against their exclusion, as unworthy of Divine benevolence; but, where would be the benevolence, or even the justice, of either perilling or paining, for their sake,

countless myriads of happy worlds, who are as thankful to Christ for their confirmation in innocence and bliss, as His church is for redemption?

If you never went into this question before, or if you yet feel as if it were foreign to the subject,—and especially if you be inclined to ask, why the fate of the wicked should turn at all upon the safety of the universe—do remember, that however little you have cared about the "principalities and powers in heavenly places," God cares for them, and has committed them all to the care of Christ. They are not "as sheep without a shepherd," any more than the flock in heaven itself; yea, they are *incorporated* with the church under Christ. This is Paul's real meaning, when he says, that "God has gathered together in *one*, all things in heaven and earth in Christ," and "by Him reconciled all things," Eph. i. 10; Colos. i. 20. Thus, it is not the church only, even when completed, that is the whole reward of the Saviour's sacrifice. No, indeed! Hear Paul again: "For the death of the cross, God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, heavenly and earthly;"—for that is the meaning of the expression, "things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth," Philip. ii. 9, 10. Thus it is, that the eternal interests of all worlds demand the eternal exclusion of all the wicked; and that, however awful, can neither be unjust nor unkind, if it be only wise, and but fair, that the holy should not be contaminated nor tempted by the unholy. Whoever, therefore, will look into "the bottomless pit," and listen to either its blasphemies or rage, and then look up to heaven, and abroad upon all the "heavenly places" of creation, will soon say,—although with deep solemnity,

and not without a sigh,—it would not be love to *risk* all worlds for the sake of the infernal world! If then, this be your conviction, you now hear, pealing from star to star all over the universe, not only the voice, "There is a God!" but also the cry, "Flee from the wrath to come!" For you see, that there can be no place of refuge in any quarter of infinity, if you neglect the cross here.

But now, this is just the point to pause at, and judge of the love of God in redemption. That delivers from the wrath to come, by delivering from the *causes* of that wrath,—the love of sin, and the hatred of holiness. This deserves special attention; for you will never dread hell itself as you ought, until you dread its *spirit* as much as its torments. Now such is the spirit of the lost,—whether men or angels,—that were there no actual punishment whatever in hell, yet it brings the hatred of God and goodness to such a pitch of inveterate malignity, that I would flee from it, did no flames urge me, but just the flames of the passions themselves. I do not refine away, as mere figures, the terrific forms in which "the wrath of God is revealed;" but, as it is wrath against ungodliness, and as ungodliness is settled aversion to God and holiness, I do see in that, unspeakable misery as well as degradation, were hell in all other respects not worse than this world. And, who can think of everlasting rancour and rage against Jehovah, or of everlasting aversion to all moral excellence, or of endless slavery to all vile and violent passions, and not feel that this would be the very depth of wretchedness, were there nothing else to endure? Now it was in order to save from this *wreck* of the soul's powers, as well as from the wrath to come, that God so loved the world as to give His Son to die for us. O, never think about PERISHING, with-

out thinking how all the faculties and affections of the mind will *perish* to all good purposes, and survive only for evil!

It is by far too common to think only about the punishment of sin. The *power* of sin, however, is quite as shocking and horrible when it is looked into closely. Then, a searching eye will see that the love of God, in giving Christ to die for us, was taking measures to prevent "the *second* death" of the soul; or the utter and eternal *dying out* of whatever survived its *first* spiritual death. "Herein is love!" Salvation is saving the soul from becoming *fiendish*, as well as from being condemned; from being *lost* to all greatness and goodness, as well as from being punished. Do think of the "second death" of the soul! That is, to be entirely and eternally *dead* to all noble principles,—to all generous emotions,—to all holy desires! Can you bear the thought of this? If not, admire and adore the love of God, which, rather than such *perishing* should pervert the whole soul for ever, gave His Son to "save us from our sins," and thus from hell also.

If these hints throw any light upon the benevolence of God, you will now see why Divine love never pleads its own claims upon human love, but by the "unspeakable gift" of the Son as a Saviour. There is far more wisdom, as well as kindness, in this gift, than appears at first sight, especially in reference to the *progress* of time and the *career* of eternity. I name this point, because you are familiar with the fact, that only the Son of God could have been a Saviour to the world. Well may you believe this; for nothing can be more obvious or certain than that the Father would have "spared" His Son, if by any other sacrifice He could have saved the world. There is, however, more than

this in the matter. Our world is an *advancing* world; in which science, research, and experiment, are for ever multiplying the proofs of the Divine benevolence. We have already reached a point, at which all the elements are coming in to our service, with a power and rapidity that our fathers never dreamt of, and that we cannot calculate. Should, therefore, sceptical philosophy not pervert practical science, there will soon be such floods of light poured in upon the Divine benevolence, from all the powers of nature, that the whole earth will be full of the goodness of God, in visible and available improvements, which mankind will ascribe to the Creator. Thus there is coming up with rapid steps, a state of things, on land and sea, that will command the acknowledgment of God's paternal good-will to man. But come what may, or however all nature become the servant of man, God has taken care that His own love shall never depend for its demonstration or illustration upon any service that either matter or mind may ever render to human comfort. He has, from the beginning of the world, rested the proof of His love to the world, upon the gift and sacrifice of His SON; and there He will rest it, until "time shall be no more," whatever time may produce to alleviate suffering, or to bless society. God knew well what He was *doing*, when He so loved the world as to give His Son to be the propitiation for its sins. He foresaw how the world would go on from "conquering to conquer" the elements, energies, and secrets of nature, until they were all yoked to the car of commerce, and the wain of agriculture, and thus tributary to plenty, and conducive to comfort. In order that no man might ever make these things idols, nor argue from them that God was love, He threw the whole proof of His love upon the plan of salvation.

And wisely; for man will always be a sinner, and thus ought to feel himself a debtor to mercy, even if he should succeed in turning the earth into an Eden again.

But this view of the matter bears far more upon the progress of eternity, than upon that of time, much as it bears upon the latter, when the millennium shall have begun. For when intellect is perfect, and the whole universe shall enter upon a joint eternity of joy, and be open at all points to both vision and visits, the very excess of such bliss will require a *balance-wheel* upon its emotions; and that will be for ever found in the one sublime and solemn fact, that the death of Christ is the *standard* of Divine love. For that fact can never be misunderstood. It will always prove, beyond all shadow of doubt, that Divine love is *holy* love; and thus, as Christ can never die again, no world, and no creature, will ever dare to think that *experiments* on the Divine will can be safely made. Now no gift, but His Son, could have placed moral government in this light. Laws, however good; and warnings, however great; and both, however influential, for even myriads of ages, might yet become *questions*, as eternity goes on to expand mind and advance knowledge; but it never can become a question, whether God will repeat the atonement, nor whether He will abide by the rule in which it originated. The one great Sacrifice will thus be an eternal and unchangeable light, into which all holy beings will for ever bring every other light which springs up from the researches and discoveries of their mighty minds. There never can be a moral error in judgment on the part of any holy creature that understands the cross. Accordingly, "there is no *night*" in heaven now, because "the Lamb is the light of it." Although, therefore, the death of Christ be the

wonder of all the wonders of Divine love, it is also the glory of Divine wisdom; for it teaches more, and touches deeper, than all other demonstrations of either the evil of sin, or the necessity of obedience. How dwarfish, then, is the intellect that never takes into account how eternal happiness and holiness can be maintained in a universe, where thinking, inquiring, and judging, will go on for ever, upon a scale bounded only by the limits of creation, and the infinity of the Godhead? And, especially, where is the *sense* of the man who does not see in the atonement the brightest, wisest, and best of all God's measures for spreading and perpetuating happiness? Why, in every sense, the cross of Christ is, and will be for ever, the *sceptre* to sway all worlds.

But now, come back upon time. It is infinitely wise and kind on the part of God, that He points and appeals to His Son only, as the proof that He is love in relation to man. This is a fine provision now against man's proneness to take for granted, that temporal blessings are tokens of Divine favour; and the check will be more wanted when the world becomes more comfortable; for earthly good, however it please the heart, never *wins* it to love either God or holiness. When, therefore, the world shall be all but Eden again, there will be incalculable temptations to *rest* in present enjoyment, and to mistake gratitude for love. But then, as now, God will require the *heart;* and, therefore, He will *seek* it only by the love of His own heart, as that shines in the death of His Son. Nothing else, indeed, can win the heart as He wants it. He wants it to be a penitent and believing heart,—because it is a *sinful* heart; and no view of His love that nature gives, or earthly comforts could give, would ever concentrate its

hatred against sin, or shut up its hopes to the cross. Were not the millennium, therefore, to be ascendency of the Gospel, as well as the reign of peace and plenty on earth, it would be no desirable consummation. It would, indeed, be as fatal to the soul, as it will be favourable to the body.

Were I to set before you an *outline* of this attribute, to be filled up by your own thinking, I would say, Consider how the love of God renders His holiness beautiful, His wisdom majestic, His justice amiable, His faithfulness sure, and His mercy free. Think of omniscience as the watchful eye of His love; of omnipotence as its mighty arm; of unchangeableness as its stability, and of eternity as its duration. But do more than *think* deeply. Pray devoutly, if you would have "the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost." Mind is not *itself*, in either grasp or grandeur, on this subject until the heart glow with devotion.

CHAPTER X.

THE JUSTICE OF GOD.

"His justice is necessary to His less disputed perfections. Justice is but the perseverance of His wisdom, the determination of His power, and the victory of His love."—DR. HAMILTON.

"Let not the youthful (wit) think that wicked men can easily gain the favour of God, by gifts or prayers, as if He could divide the spoil with sinners when they sin, as wolves would share their prey with the dogs for leave to devour the sheep. He will not vacate the tribunal, nor evade justice. Wert thou small enough to creep into the centre of the earth, or sublime enough to fly on wings of fire into the heavens, thou shalt suffer deserved punishment here, or in hell. God cannot be bribed by the wicked, to do what is unjust."—PLATO, LEG.

"Were God to do an act of injustice, He would expunge His right of dominion, by blotting out that nature which renders Him *fit* to reign."—AMYRALD.

"A Being willing—as a benevelent one necessarily is—to do *more* good to others than justice demands, cannot be unwilling to do *less*; the only manner in which He could possibly be unjust."—DWIGHT.

WE have seen that God is wise; He must therefore be just, for nothing is more unwise in principle or operation than injustice. We shall see that God is holy; He must therefore be just, for nothing is more unholy than injustice. We have seen that God is omniscient; He cannot, therefore, be *unjust* through ignorance, or mistake, for His "understanding is infinite." Thus we get at once upon ground equally solid and lofty; from which we can look abroad and around upon all the sphere in which Divine justice acts. And *what* do we behold? Angels in heaven, and angels in hell: human spirits before the

throne of God without spot; and human spirits in hell without hope: small nations basking in the effulgence of the Gospel; and great nations sitting in the shadow of death and idolatry: families in affluence and honour; families in distress and disgrace: individuals holy and happy; and individuals immoral and miserable. Many saved, and more lost! Over this scene in all its varieties, over all these souls in all their conditions, *justice* presides! Equal justice, the same justice in heaven, earth, and hell! Do you *believe* this? If this be not the fact God is *unjust!* Where now are the conclusions we drew, and thought so fairly drawn, from His *wisdom* and *holiness?* Does our *solid* ground shake? our *lofty* ground sink before the shock and pressure of familiar facts? Were you not *startled* by the strong manner in which I have put the case, I would say at once, No; our ground *rises* in elevation, *augments* in solidity; for, what is HOLINESS? *God's hatred of sin:* then all the suffering we glanced at is but the just punishment of sin.

Justice consists, not in doing the *same* in all cases, because all cases are not alike; but in doing what is *right* in every case. Doing the same in all cases would be *unjust* in the extreme, and therefore it is unfair in the extreme to judge of God's dealings with nations or individuals, by *comparison.* Each case should be judged of by itself; and if this be done fairly, *fairness* will be found to characterise the whole procedure of God towards all and each of His creatures. It will *pave* our way to the proof of this, and prepare you to understand the proofs of it, to remark that God can have no motive nor reason for treating any of His creatures unjustly.

All injustice springs from *envy* or *ambition* of some kind.

But for God, there is nothing in any creature to envy; for all rank, temporal, intellectual, and moral, is from Himself. He cannot therefore *covet* what He freely conferred; and, thus, He can have no *temptation* to be unjust. A man who is unjust in his dealings, is so because he expects to *gain* more by fraud than by fairness. But were God even capable of acting unfairly, there is absolutely *nothing* for Him to gain. All creatures and all things are His own already; entirely so, eternally so; and therefore He can neither have motive nor end for His being unjust. Injustice has *temptations* about it at times to men in certain circumstances; it promises to *relieve* them, to *raise* them; but God cannot be happier nor higher than He is, and therefore can have no *end* to gain by injustice at any time. Now in the absence of *all* motives and reasons to the contrary, we have full confidence in the justice of those we do *business* with. We think and say of some men, "they are *quite above* unfair dealings; they have so much, and gain so much by uprightness, that fraud in their case would be *bad policy*, even if it were not criminal in itself." And if the absence of *all temptation* to injustice make you calculate upon man for equity, how much more upon God, "who cannot be tempted of evil," and to whom there is nothing *tempting* in the universe? He "is God over all," and therefore "blessed for ever;" and thus can never have any end to gain by acting unfairly. View Him therefore enthroned in glory and bliss, and conceive, if you can, any *reason* for even one act of injustice. It could not be to increase His *power*, for He has all power already; nor to *keep* His power, for it cannot be lost; nor to increase His *happiness*, for it is infinite and perfect; nor to *prolong* His pleasures, as they are for

evermore. In fact, injustice would *injure* His own enjoyment, because He could not conceal it from *Himself*, nor soften it by excuses. Unless, therefore, you charge God with ignorance, rashness, or malignity, you cannot imagine it possible for Him to treat any creature unjustly.

He does, however, treat one very *differently* from another: this is an undeniable fact; we see it, we feel it, and therefore if difference of *lot* be injustice, all these, and all other reasonings go for nothing. But variety is not *unrighteousness*, as we shall soon see. In the meantime, however, it deserves notice that we are only staggered or perplexed by *severe* lots and *extreme* sufferings. A prosperous nation, family, or individual, seldom, if ever, forces our thoughts upon the question of *justice* in prospering them, unless in the case of comparing others with them; and even then the difficulty we feel is, not to account for their *prosperity*, but for the *adversity* of others. Prosperity agrees with all our habitual ideas of justice. Aware of this, I am aware too that I risk being thought *singular* when I declare, that my chief difficulty is to reconcile prosperity of any kind with justice.

I cannot account for *one* comfort or convenience being given to a sinner, until I refer to the *satisfaction* which justice obtained by the death of Christ. Adversity in a sinful world is as *natural* as darkness in a sunless world; but happiness, or even hope; comfort, or even convenience, amongst men "*alienated* from God by wicked works," jars with all my ideas of justice; and that, throughout all the courses of my reasoning, until I settle upon the work of Christ: for as justice is the *just punishment of sin*, and sin is not *equally* punished in this life, I must either anticipate future misery for all mankind, or trace all present

happiness, and all future hope, to a *perfect* atonement. I dare not join in, nor connive at, such clamorous questioning of the Divine procedure as, "Is this appointment *fair?* —This trial *right?*—This sentence *just?*" JUST! justice to you and me would be *hell* at once, and for ever; otherwise, God is not holy. When I consider this fact, I pause and ask myself, why have philosophers and divines devoted so much time and labour to

"Justify the ways of God to man"?

And why do I attempt to imitate their example by arguing, that the ills of life are not *unjustly* severe? All the difficulty, if there be any, is on the *other* side. The ills of life are too *few*, and too *feeble*, yea, *unjustly* few and feeble, seeing sin is the cause of them. Be not *startled* with this assertion; it may sound strangely at first, but it is only sober truth, if *sin* be the procuring cause of all suffering. Of course you will not suspect me, however I wonder, of *wishing* that our afflictions were more numerous and severe than they are. The principle I go upon now is, that *too little* punishment for sin is as unjust as *too much*, so far as the honour of the LAW is concerned. Now, what is inflicted in this life, is *less* than the law demands and denounces. The worse lot in the world is *better* than the Divine law could allow, of itself; and therefore there must be some quarter in which law and justice have gone all their lengths; for, otherwise, they do not go far enough now. I mean, not so far as they *threaten;* which is as unjust to *themselves*, as going too far would be unjust to others. There is, however, a quarter in which they have gone all the lengths they threaten or require—and I do not mean HELL; there, indeed, they inflict the curse fully; but if that were the *only way* of bringing up the punishment of sin to the sentence against

sin, hell must be the portion of all sinners. I refer, therefore, to the sufferings of Christ. In His humiliation and death justice must have taken its full course; for, otherwise, human sufferings could no more be justly mitigated, than human sins could be pardoned. This is what I said before, and why I said that apart from the satisfaction of Christ, the chief difficulty lies, not in accounting for so much misery as there is, but in accounting for there being *so little*, or so much less than sin deserves. And do you not see that if future punishment be no more than strict justice, then *present* punishment is too little, unjustly small, but upon the principle of the law being magnified by the sufferings of Christ?

Here, then, is the true and triumphant method of vindicating the justice of God, in all cases of hard lots and heavy trials;—to prove that they are *unjustly* easy and light, except upon the principle that justice indemnifies itself by drawing upon the finished work of Christ.

This argument can hardly be made so plain as to become *popular*, or grow into general use; but those who can follow it up and apply it, will find it useful. In order, however, to grapple with the popular difficulties which bring into question the justice of God, more is necessary than showing the utter *improbability* of God acting unjustly. Observe, therefore, the light in which the Divine law, as the rule of universal obedience, places Divine justice.

The substance and spirit of the eternal law have been compressed by Christ into this golden rule, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.*" Is there even the shadow of a shade of *injustice* in this requirement? Would it not be an act of injustice to ourselves to wish such a law abrogated or abridged?

Is it not kind as well as fair, to be thus *commanded* to fix our best affections upon the best of Beings? To love supremely one altogether lovely? An untutored savage, of common sense, would admit and feel the justice of this law, nor could the most profound philosopher start a rational objection against it, or devise an excuse for not loving the God of love.

He is not, however, loved by all, nor by many of those who have this law in their hands, and in their memories. He is even *hated* by the generality of mankind, if dislike to His service, and disobedience to His commands, be any proof of hatred; and surely stronger proof could hardly be given! Now, such being the case, must not God *punish* rebellion and ingratitude? Put yourselves in His place for a moment, and say if *you* would not feel it to be an act both of kindness and justice to punish children and servants who should treat you as God is treated? If so, what would you think of my sense, were I to come in after such an act of domestic discipline, and question the *justice* of dismissing a bad servant, or chastising a base child? Now there is an equal want of sense shown when persons affect to be *shocked* by the distress and disgrace which God inflicts upon the world from time to time. He is a *Master*, "but where is His honour?" He is a *Parent*, who has "nourished and brought up children; but they have rebelled against Him;" and therefore it is that there is so much suffering in the world. And we have seen that there would be much more were it equal to the amount and demerit of the sin that exists. Now, add to this, the fact, that God punishes us with a view to reclaim—to bring sinners to their senses—that they may not push their way to the flames unresisted or ignorantly. There is, therefore, true kindness, as well as real justice, in human

sufferings as inflicted by God. "All these things He worketh that He may save souls alive, and therefore many such things are with Him." And as to afflicting those who *do love* Him, in common with those who hate Him, the justice of that is not questioned by those who love God; and if they themselves acquit Him of both unkindness and injustice in their lots, surely others have no right to find fault with His procedure towards His own people. The principle of these remarks will apply also to the HEATHEN: justice presides over their lot, both in time and in eternity. This is not, indeed, so easily shown or seen; but there can be no doubt of its truth, because God can have no motive, reason, or end for treating them unjustly. Were they to be judged by a *law* they never heard of, or by the *Gospel*, which has never visited them, that would be unjust. Or, were they to be punished to the same extent as those who neglect the great salvation, that would be unjust; but neither the one nor the other of these events will come to pass. The Judge of the whole earth "will do right" in their case; and hence the assurance we have from His own lips, "that the servant who knew not his Lord's will," and thus, from ignorance, did it not, shall be "beaten with fewer stripes" than wilful transgressors. What that mitigated punishment will be, we are not told, and therefore cannot define; but surely we know enough of God to be sure that it will not be unjust. If anything be certain, it is that He will do only what is right. And this single principle the mind must repose on, for nothing else can be said with safety. But that repose must not be to *sleep* over the fate of the heathen; must not be indifference to their case. Oh, no! the heaviest account against Christendom at the day of judgment will be *the neglect* of sending the Gospel to the heathen world:

their blood will be charged upon those who allow them to perish for lack of knowledge. See to it then, that no love of money or ease involve us in the "*blood-guiltiness*" of withholding the Gospel from the nations of the earth. But, sent it cannot be, while many give no more to that object than they do to a local charity or Sunday-school.

Let us observe the light in which the glorious Gospel places the justice of God. The substance of that Gospel is that God is just in justifying the ungodly who believe in Jesus; that He is just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all iniquity; the very *last* things to which justice seems applicable! By all ordinary rules of judging, justice seems to forbid the pardon of sin; for if it be just to punish sin, how can it be just to pardon it? This is a question which would have baffled all the concentrated wisdom of men and angels. If their "eternal all" had hung upon answering it, they could have devised no expedient by which God should be as just in acquitting as in condemning sinners. But such an expedient God Himself devised, and has revealed; yea, He has acted upon it. Rom. iii. 21—26. Read that oracle in your own Bible, before reading the next chapter; and remembering that there is neither mystery nor mysticism in the fact that justice finds its best satisfaction in the sacrifice of Emmanuel. No punishment of sin is, or can be, so awful or impressive as His death. In vain you would try to imagine anything so conclusive or signal as that. Now, as justice can do no more than *punish*, it could nowhere punish as it did in Him. God's beloved Son dying on the cross, is a spectacle more awful than hell itself.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

"Sometimes we meet with persons who, in handling this subject, put us off with rhetoric instead of logic; for they tell us, that starting difficulties concerning goodness is murmuring against Heaven; and ask, 'Hath not the potter power over the clay?' This comparison was very proper, to silence the unreasonable clamours of such as fancied themselves injured by the dispensations of Providence. But the question is not, what the clay has a right to expect, but what a beneficent Potter is *likely* to do."—TUCKER.

"There is a difference between those who ask questions and make objections out of curiosity, and those who desire instruction. The former deserve the answer, 'Nay, but who art thou, O man, that repliest *against* God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?' I do think there would have been a different answer, had the question been put in a better spirit."—ORIGEN.

"O man, think not that God made thee, like a piece of clay, without will or motive. The clay cannot answer the potter; but thou cavillest with God."—HIEROME, EPIST.

"The wicked are not decreed to be condemned, nor shall they be condemned, but for their sin; because the beginning of condemnation is from *man*; but reprobation is the *beginning* of condemnation. The decree proceeded from the foresight of something *worthy* of damnation, and is not an absolute act of God's will, as is election."—PROF. WILLET'S HEXAPLA.

AFTER fifteen hundred years of theological jangling, it is now generally admitted that Divine sovereignty does nothing but good, and has nothing to do with the loss or ruin of any sinner whatever. The fact might have been known from the beginning of Christianity, if either the world or the church had taken Christ's word for it; for He said, in connection with one of those judicial acts which are thought, by hasty reasoners, to be most arbi-

trary, that it was "*good* in the sight" of God to hide even saving truths from "the wise and prudent, and to reveal them unto babes." So it was, very good, and the best way of consulting the *general* good of mankind; for the Scribes and Pharisees were "the wise and prudent," from whom God hid the mysteries of the Gospel; and, if we may judge from the manner in which these men made "void the LAW by their traditions," we may well join Christ in *thanking* God that they were deprived of the opportunity of corrupting the Gospel.

We have, indeed, a specimen of what they would have made of the Gospel, had it been intrusted to them, in the case of those Hebrews who were not thorough *Pharisees*, but partly Christians. They actually blended so much Judaism with Christianity, that Paul told the Galatians, that "another Gospel, which made Christ of no effect" to them, had been got up. Now if men of some principle could so pervert the glorious Gospel, what a *caricature* of it would have been made by the worldly wise and legally prudent Pharisees, had not God hid it from their eyes!

Well, therefore, may theologians now agree to maintain that sovereignty never does anything but what is good; for the utmost severity in punishing sin is never injustice, nor arbitrary will; and the least mercy is never merited.

Theology must, however, go further than this yet, before common-sense can take the sovereignty of GRACE as calmly as we take the sovereignty of *providence;* and even *more* so; for there is some defect in all exhibitions of the Gospel, which either make or leave a man to feel that the blessings of salvation are in it like *prizes* in a lottery, which

may or may not fall to his share, do as he will. The true "Gospel of the grace of God," is not truly preached by any man who throws even the shadow of a doubt upon the fact, that "whosoever believeth shall be saved;" or who throws into the nature of saving faith anything but the hearty belief of saving truth, for a holy purpose. One thing much wanted is, as complete a reform in speaking mysteriously about the *secret will* of God as has taken place in speaking about reprobation. No man of sound mind, who has set Himself to trace "the mind of the Spirit" in the Scriptures, would speak now, of reprobation, as the sovereign *decree* of God; or of the loss of the soul, as springing from the *mere will* of God. Neither willing nor decreeing is needed, in order to sin proving the ruin of the soul. Sin can do its own work in that matter, by its own *hell-ward* tendencies, without help from either a decree or a volition; just as it is unnecessary to decree darkness in addition to letting the sun go down.

This is now almost a recognised maxim. And so ought it to be, that the *secret will* of God, whatever it be, will never invalidate nor violate the REVEALED WILL of God. It is unwise, therefore, however well meant, to adopt a mysterious and solemn mode of *hinting* significantly or suspiciously, as if all that "meets the eye" in a promise, invitation, command, or assurance, of God's written Word, was *more* than would be found in God's secret will. The bare idea that God has *two wills* is absurd; and the insinuation that He says more than He means, is impious. No solemnity of manner, nor humility of spirit ought to screen this blasphemy from indignant rebuke: for it is treating God as a liar to imply, even, that His secret will is different from His revealed will. Besides, were there a secret

will, different from His public, its secrecy renders all reasoning about it, and reference to it, useless and impertinent. The *unknown* can prove nothing against the known, nor a human *guess* invalidate a Divine assurance.

When I have heard persons harping or hinting about God's secret will setting aside His public will, I have been tempted to ask them, Why do you never rid yourselves of this fear by hoping that His *public* will may set aside His *secret* will? Why not the known will invalidate the unknown will? If I believed in *two* wills, I would take this side of the question, and prove that if God was of "two minds," it was far more likely that He would change His secret will, which no one knows anything about, than His public, which He has so long and fully exhibited in His Word. But God has not two wills. He has *secrets*, and many of them, and all of them unfathomable; but He has no secret will at variance with His revealed will; and even no secrets inconsistent with His public promises and explicit oath. If there be any "lamps of fire" *behind* the eternal throne, they contain the same golden oil, and were lighted with the same torch of truth as the "seven lamps of fire *before* the throne." Let us take care, therefore, not to impute nor imply anything like *double-mindedness* in the case of God.

We have much to learn yet, even in speaking of Divine sovereignty, although we no longer ascribe to it the loss of a single soul. The great object of theologians now seems to be, to distinguish between sovereignty and supremacy; or to ascribe all acts of equity to *moral* government, and all acts of mercy to sovereign good-will. It is allowed, that sovereignty has *reasons* for all the grace it bestows, and may even have *rules* for the bestowment of grace; but

it is almost denied that we know or can know anything about the reasons or rules of sovereignty.

Now if by this denial is meant, that we can know nothing about them by mere *reasoning*, or philosophic research, no one would acknowledge the fact more readily than myself. But I will not acknowledge that the BIBLE shows none of the *reasons* or *rules*, according to which grace is bestowed. Indeed, rather than be bound to speak of sovereignty as *inexplicable* in salvation, I would fling the word *sovereignty* to the winds, as an unscriptural word, and keep to "the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth." But I *like* the word sovereignty, although it is not in the Bible; and will not throw it away, because some make it mean more, and others less, than the HISTORY of the reign of grace warrants.

Now we have in the Scriptures the history of the sovereign bestowment of mercy and grace upon individuals, families, churches, and nations; and from that history we may collect the great general REASONS why God saves any sinner. His own glory is both the original and final reason of all salvation.

It is, indeed, the grand reason for all His works; and a better cannot be imagined; for the glory of God is just the manifestation of His infinite excellence, or the development of the perfections which are the sources of His own felicity. God Himself is "blessed for ever," and thus can create everlasting blessedness in others, by exercising the perfections which constitute His *own* happiness.

Now so far as His *natural* glory has been manifested, it has been so upon a large and grand scale. The material universe is no small nor faint mirror of His glory. Everything in creation is countless, or immeasurable, or incom-

prehensible. It is not little or dark heavens which "declare His glory." There is an infinitude about the display of His natural glory in creation.

Now, to say the least, His *moral* glory is as worthy of manifestation, and not likely to be displayed upon a small scale eventually, whatever it may appear at present. Accordingly, He has made the innumerable stars of the heavens both the emblem and pledge of the "many sons whom He will bring to glory." They are merely dreamers, therefore, who talk about redemption as being the chief display of the Divine glory, and yet talk of the redeemed as a "*small remnant*," because sovereignty regulates salvation! Sovereignty regulated *creation;* but that did not make the universe small, nor the stars few, nor the firmament dark. God might, indeed, had it "seemed good in His sight," have made the universe ten thousand times larger than it is, or even made it the magnetic centre of ten thousand other universes. But it did not seem good in His sight to do so. He set bounds to creation. He did not, however, make creation a *small* work. Thus, there is nothing in sovereignty to induce or warrant a suspicion that but "few will be saved" eventually, or that God *intended* any to be lost. Sovereignty never saves but for the sake of what Christ has done and suffered.

After all that has been said, or can be said, about the *independence* of the Divine will, or about God's right to do whatever He chooses, it is both the revealed and historical fact, that He never wills or chooses to save for any *other* reason than just because Christ died. He never glorifies Himself at the expense of the glory of Christ, nor exercises His own WILL, but through Christ's WORK. It is ridiculous, therefore, to say that we know nothing about

the *reasons* of sovereign procedure in salvation. The *moral* reason why sovereignty saves any, is the atonement of Christ. Sovereignty sets out from Calvary, wherever it may go to pluck brands from the burning. It would have saved none, had not Christ died. Now as Christ, by the grace of God "tasted death for every man," and was "the propitiation for the sins of the whole world," it is self-evident that sovereignty can go any length in saving, that is either good or wise in the sight of God.

It would not be very difficult to multiply reasons which influence the will of God in having "mercy upon whom He *will* have mercy;" but the question, Has sovereignty any *rules* in its procedure? now demands attention. Now in this matter, I will adhere still more rigidly to mere *facts*, without reasoning at all upon them; because I am not accountable for facts. It is the fact, that it is a fixed rule in the exercise of Divine sovereignty to bestow no grace apart from the knowledge of the truth.

This is so immutable a law to God, as well as *with* God, that no *number* of men, nor any *length* of time, leads Him to deviate from it. If myriads of souls, or of ages, could lead to a deviation from this general rule, or create an exception to it, China and Japan would do so; but, there they sit in the shadow of death! Sovereignty does nothing by grace, because they do nothing to seek for the truth, and the church little to send it! China might possess herself of the Gospel at any time, just as easily as she imports British manufactures, or European cannon. All the Protestant churches in the world would vie with each other in preaching the Gospel over her vast empire, were she only half as willing to welcome truth, as she is to sell tea and buy opium. I shall not be suspected of any want of sym-

pathy for China in speaking thus; and, therefore, I speak out. I think the Chinese and the church equally to blame for the long absence of the Gospel in that country. China once had the Gospel; and she has had, since the Reformation, opportunities of cultivating friendly relations with all the Protestant states of Europe.

But the rule before us holds good at home also. Grace does not reign apart from the truth in Britain. Sovereignty does nothing to save sinners, in either the villages of the country, or the dark alleys of our cities, which are left without the Gospel. In like manner those who neglect the Gospel are never converted by grace. God never goes out of His way to save those who neglect His great salvation. Now and then, indeed, He startles some by remarkable providences, even in the worst circles; but whenever He converts any by His Spirit, who turn at His reproof, it is by sending them, in some way, under the truth as it is in Jesus. Thus, there is not a more fixed or uniform law in nature, or even in moral government, than that God saves only by some of His own saving *means* of grace.

But, now comes the difficult point. All are not saved who have the means of grace, nor even all who make some use of them. Here is the *circle* in which sovereignty is supposed to have no *ascertainable* rule. Here stands the great lottery of hap-hazard theology. Now having never been a contractor for either Arminian or Calvinistic *shares* in this lottery, I feel under no restraints from either system. I do not believe that God openly commands one thing, and may secretly *will* another. I believe it to be nonsense, if not something worse, to suspect the Gospel of being anything less than positively "glad tidings of great joy" to

every creature in all nations. There are, I confess, *difficulties* in my creed; but I put up with them, rather than contradict God's OATH, that He willeth not the death of a sinner, but that all men should come to repentance, and thus live.

I am confirmed in these views of the Gospel, because sovereignty laid down a rule for itself, in saving sinners before Christ appeared as the Sun of righteousness. It was prophesied that He should arise with healing in His wings, *first*, upon them who *feared* God; and shine so discriminatingly that any one could "discern between the righteous and the wicked, or between him that served God and him that served Him not." Accordingly, we find that when Christ did arise as the Sun of righteousness, He did shine first upon those who had some fear of God; for none of His first disciples were either profligate or speculative men; He chose, in fact, the *best* men He could find; for even Judas was no profligate, but rather a worldly-minded and revengeful man. Taking, therefore, the Scriptural account of the whole body, *given* by God to Christ, and *chosen* by Christ out of the world *then*, you cannot help seeing that the sovereignty of both Father and Son gave the *preference* to sober, industrious, and simple-hearted men; that thus God and the Lamb might mark their approbation of good conduct, not as *merit*, but as morals, and thus lead *bad men* to see the necessity of mending their ways, and to feel, that if doing well was no merit, doing *ill* was a perilous and provoking thing. How impious and shameful it is, therefore, to speak as if it were of no consequence, in reference to the sovereignty of grace, how *bad* a man may be! The worst man is not, indeed, too bad for the blood of Christ to cleanse, nor for

the grace of the Spirit to sanctify; and, in fact, God gave, and Christ chose the best, to prove how much need the *worst* had of a Saviour and a sanctifier; but they chose the best, *first*, to prove that badness, although pardonable, is no recommendation to sovereignty, and that it "does *signify* much" whether or not a man is doing well or ill.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HOLINESS OF GOD.

"'Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts.' The trinary repetition of the words expresses superlativeness of degree."—DR. HENDERSON.

"Though men, for our information, distinguish between the attributes of God and the nature of God, yet in Him they are the same. Look, as the wisdom of God, is the wise God; and the power of God, the powerful God; and the justice of God, the just God; and the righteousness of God, the righteous God; and the grace of God, the graciousness of God; so the holiness of God, is the holy God. His nature and His name are one. God is essentially holy. It is the top of all His glory. He is holy in all His sayings, and holy in all His doings. His smiles are holy, and His frowns holy. He is holy in giving, and holy in taking away." —THOS. BROOKS' BEAUTY OF HOLINESS. 1662.

"We must not say that God wants either beauty or virtue. He is self-sufficient, and therefore perfect. God, who is the idea of all good, has an infinite pulchritude. He is the ocean of spotless beauty."—PLATO.

IT is not assuming too much, perhaps, to suppose that the eternity of the Godhead, although incomprehensible, is yet so attractive as well as impressive to you now, that you have willingly dwelt at times upon the sublime exclamation of Moses: "From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God." Having transported your thoughts beyond the birth of time and nature, and tried to think, in the solitudes of infinite space, before their eternal silence was broken by a note of praise, or a breath of life, or a whisper of motion, your spirit has hovered around "the heaven of heavens," where the self-existing and self-

enjoying Godhead dwelt alone from everlasting; but, like the dove of the deluge, it has been unable to keep long on the wing, and equally unable to rest upon the dark and deep waters all around it. Or, if your awe-struck spirit has settled for a moment in that silent and lonely eternity, trying to conceive why or how the *Godhead* felt it to be neither vacant nor joyless, you have found no idea either so natural or rational, as the revealed fact, that the Godhead had their felicity in their mutual fellowship of mind and motive, whilst contemplating "from everlasting" all that they intend doing "to everlasting," for their own glory. This, to say the least, is both a simple and sweet idea. And, had we anything like a clear conception of the *future* eternity, as probably a scene of *endless* creating, and thus of governing and blessing, in order to display the Divine glory in brighter forms to the present universe, as finite minds can bear them; and to new creations as they arise, fit to share the work and joy of the old; we should not find so much difficulty in conceiving how an eternity of planning preceded an eternity of action. Nothing, indeed, suggests such vast expectations of the varied scenes that will keep up the wonder and joy of all holy beings "for ever and ever," as the fact that the Godhead found their own happiness "from everlasting," in the prospect of what they would do and give "to everlasting." I will not allow myself to imagine what creations, or what blessings, or what glories, will for ever come *out* of the eternal counsels of the Father, Son, and Spirit; nor do I wish for any other sources of happiness than seeing and serving them for ever; nor do I think that anything will ever surpass or equal the glory of being "for ever with the Lord;" but still, I do think

that the period will come, in the cycles of eternity, when the universe as it now is will be as much a mere speck in creation as the earth is now; and when the intellect of all holy creatures will be farther above the mind of Gabriel than his mind is now above an infant's.

If this view of the bliss of the Godhead "from everlasting" throw any ray of light into the past eternity, a still brighter ray may be thrown from the infinity of the Divine nature. For many and glorious as its revealed perfections are, there is no reason to suppose that *all* the Divine perfections are, or could be, revealed to man, in this world. What we do know of God was but very gradually made known. The patriarchs and prophets had, indeed, substantially the same views of God as the apostles, and as we have; but not the same in compass or clearness. It would, therefore, have been a sad mistake had either Abraham or David, or even Isaiah, imagined that Christ would add nothing to the sum of our ideas concerning the true God. It is, however, not less a mistake to imagine that we could *bear* to know all that God is. We know all that really concerns our present state of mind and character, and all that is needful for our present welfare. Enough is revealed for our *own* happiness; and yet all that is, most likely, but *one* part of the essential perfections, which were the sources of Divine happiness during the past eternity.

I do not intend to convey the idea that God, as we know Him, could have been otherwise than "blessed for ever." No, indeed! God, as "love," and God, as "glorious in holiness," could not have been otherwise. Perfect holiness, as we shall soon see, is the certain source of perfect happiness. But still, who can suppose that finite man,

weak as his mind is, could bear to know here all the perfections of the infinite Jehovah? Angels could not bear that degree of knowledge. "Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?" will most likely be a humbling question, even in heaven, and for ever; for the finite can never comprehend the Infinite fully. It is, however, most likely, well known in heaven already, that there are essential attributes of the Godhead which make its own happiness "from everlasting,"—or whilst there was nothing created,—just as intelligible and plain as the present happiness of the Godhead is. Whenever, therefore, we find ourselves unable to comprehend how the Divine nature could be perfectly blessed, when there was nothing beyond itself in the fellowship of the Godhead, we ought at once to throw ourselves upon the obvious fact, that we know the Divine nature only so far as it can make *us* happy; and not the manner in which it could be independent of all things, or make *itself* happy. In a word, it will be no secret when we see God as He is, why, or how, the Eternal Mind was, from all eternity, "Its own kingdom."

But whatever other perfections belong to Deity, than those we know, the power of both the known and unknown to make God "blessed for ever," lies in the fact, that they are "glorious in holiness." Divine holiness is the real *basis* of the Divine happiness. It is just as true that God would be *unhappy*, were He unholy, as that Satan is wretched in his own mind, even when he is not in hell. Happiness is not a thing of *place*, nor of outward circumstances. Mind, whether created or uncreated, is of such a nature, that it must think, and feel, and wish, and plan; and, therefore, if it be not *pure*, its purposes will be

evil in some way; and thus become eventually their own punishment.

This would be far more true of the Infinite Mind, were there any bad or base feeling in it, than of a finite mind; because it has power to act out its feelings and wishes to any extent, and for ever; and thus, any act of injustice, treachery, or cruelty on the part of God, as it could only be *wilful*, and against the omniscient light of His infinite understanding, would recoil upon His own head. An unholy God would be miserable, just in proportion to His power of thinking; for His power of *acting* could not keep down thought.

It would be as unwise as it is painful, to pursue this argument much farther. It is not unnecessary, however, to glance at it thus distinctly; for the holiness of God is neither well understood, nor well liked, in general; and, therefore, we need to calculate what would be the consequences of our natural wish that God were less holy than He is. This is a very natural wish; but it is a tremendous one when looked into, and it would be *fatal* were it granted. When, indeed, we feel it, we do not wish that God were *much* less holy. We want only to bring down His holiness to a level that would let us off from the necessity of following holiness, or not punish us for being unholy. And, at first sight, there seems no great danger involved in thus lowering the standard, or relaxing the punishment. It seems only an accommodation to human weakness and convenience. So man reasons when he writhes against the duty of being "holy in all manner of conversation and godliness." But, much as Satan and his angels dislike holy men and women on earth, and much as they try to keep all mankind unholy, they would rush for-

ward in a body to *deprecate* the bare idea of God becoming unholy. Were He to become at all less holy, devils would see, if man did not, that no one could tell where the change in God would end, or how it would work. For, to be unholy, is to be *unprincipled;* and to be without principle, is to be passionate and reckless. Now, although the holiness of God will for ever keep heaven shut against all the unholy, it will never inflict unjust nor undue punishment upon either lost men or angels; but for ever preside as fairly over the sufferings of hell, as over the joys of heaven. The wrath of a holy God will no more be blind *rage* in the former place, than His love will be *blind* partiality in the latter. It will be for ever "wrath to come;" but never coming in storms or strokes of mad fury, or of malignant spite. In a word, it will never be *more* than strict justice, regulated by infinite wisdom, requires; and thus it will always be as *little* as perfect holiness can inflict. Now although that can never reconcile any one to endure or risk it, no one who is enduring it would prefer to exchange it for the *chances* of what unholy anger, and unjust wrath, and ungovernable fury, might inflict. Omnipotence, remember, *can* do anything; and, therefore, were it to act from blind and burning rage, instead of acting from wise and holy principle, hell would be infinitely more horrible than it is. I do not conjecture, therefore, when I say that "Satan and his angels" would both dread and deprecate an *unholy* God, much as they hate the holiness of Jehovah; for they cannot but see at a glance, that if holy anger and holy vengeance make hell so awful, unholy and unjust passion would make all that is bad worse.

Bring this fact to bear now upon the dislike we natu-

rally feel to the holiness of God, and upon the lurking wish that He were less holy. Were He to become unholy, all that we dread from both His holiness and justice would be as certain, and more severe than it now is. An unholy God would be, not only an unforgiving God, but an unjust and tyrannical God; for to be unholy is to be unprincipled, unreasonable, and unfeeling; and thus He would delight in spreading and perpetuating misery. Hence, we should be incalculable losers were He unholy, or less holy than He is.

The truth and force of this argument cannot be seen, however, if you understand nothing by holiness in God, but just what you mean by it in man. Many an unholy man is neither cruel nor unjust. It is also no uncommon thing for a man to lose all the holiness he once had, and yet to keep his temper and his integrity. Why, then, it may be said, would an unholy God be, necessarily, an unjust or a cruel tyrant? Why? Just because holiness means infinitely more and better, in the case of God, than in that of men. In God, it is *everything;* whereas, in the best of men it is but a *few* pure principles, feelings, and habits, surrounded with much weakness, and mixed with many imperfections. In God, holiness is the goodness of His entire nature and character; for nothing in Him is either imperfect or weak, capricious or variable. What He is, therefore, He is wholly and heartily. Hence, were He unholy at all, He would soon be entirely and universally so. Or, could He change for the worse in character, the change would go on for ever. Nor is this all. "His understanding is infinite;" and, therefore, were God to do anything unjust, unfair, or unkind, He could neither hide *nor excuse* it to Himself; and thus He would lose His own

self-respect, inevitably and irretrievably. And if He ceased to respect *Himself*, what respect could He entertain for the rights of others?

I thus go round and round the attribute of Divine holiness, looking at the *consequences* that would inevitably flow from UNHOLINESS, were that the nature or tendency of the Divine Mind. But this is a *painful* process of reasoning, because it ought to be quite unnecessary; for, to wish God to be less holy, is really wishing Him to be unhappy; and were He unhappy in His own mind, He would have no inclination to make any one else happy. I do not exactly wonder, therefore, that even *Plutarch* should hare arrived by reasoning at the conclusion, that "God is not so happy from an eternity of life, as from the excellency of His virtues;" nor, that the philosopher should have called "holiness the beauty of the Divine essence." Even *Proclus* might well call God, "the *undefiled* Governor of the world." Plato, also, as might be expected from his good sense, and especially from his deep convictions of the beauty of virtue, and the baseness of vice, said, "Evil finds no place in God."—"We can ascribe to God only things in harmony with His nature; must we not, therefore, conclude that God is, indeed, good?" Plato laboured hard to prove too, that as there are both natural and moral evils in the world, "we must either not at all ascribe them to God, nor suffer any in the city to do so; or, we must say, that God acted well and justly in inflicting them as punishments, that He might bring good out of them." Hence he concludes (if there be nothing equivocal in the expression "it seems"), "that God is in no wise unrighteous; but, *as it seems*, most righteous."—REPUB. p. 379.

I am not reluctant to quote such opinions on this point, from the sages of antiquity, although nothing was less known to the heathen than the holiness of God, in the true sense of that glorious excellence; for these opinions give Him credit for little more than bare *justice* in His government of the world. Accordingly, it is both refreshing and inspiring to listen to the loftier style in which the sacred writers celebrate "the beauty" of Divine holiness. When Moses sang at the Red Sea, "Who is like unto the Lord, glorious in holiness?" one feels as if its returning waves must have re-echoed the strain, as they flowed back into their old channels. Even when Hannah sung in the tabernacle at Shiloh, "There is none holy as Jehovah, neither is there any rock like our God," we feel as if she had known how the seraphim of heaven sing, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." So also when David challenges the Church of God to "give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness," it is impossible not to feel that both David and the church saw something of that beauty and glory of holiness, which makes it the admiration of angels and the joy of heaven.

Now is the time, whilst you feel the force of these inspired songs, to let your spirit loose again in the deep solitudes and silence of the past eternity; and, in that unchequered retirement, to let it expatiate freely upon the certain *character* that a holy God will give to all uncreated things, when He begins to act "according to the counsel of His own will." You will, indeed, soon be lost in that abyss of unborn things; but you will soon find there, with His holiness as your *clue*, simple facts, solid principles, and self-evident maxims, which, like guardian angels, will

guide you "into marvellous light" and "perfect peace," so far as the chequered aspects of nature and providence produce painful feelings. Let, then, the universe vanish from your recollection, and your own spirit be the only thing hovering in the wilderness of infinite space, and let holiness be the only moral attribute of God you understand. Holiness, in Him, is such perfect goodness as can *think* no evil, and thus can *do* no evil, nor have any motive or reason for doing wrong. Suppose yourself, therefore, looking round in all directions for the palace of "the King eternal, immortal, and invisible;" and that you discover it just as He is about to begin creation. You can *anticipate*, from His holiness, what all His works will be, if you only remember that He is about to please and glorify Himself. Reason from that fact, and your thoughts will run thus:—Will a God "glorious in holiness" rise from the throne of His holiness to act contrary to His nature? No! To make anything evil? No! To do anything unfair, or unfit, or unnecessary? No! He could *gain* nothing by anything wrong. He can *lose* nothing by "doing all things well." Then, let the universe of being rise when it will, and spread as it may—let its laws natural and moral be what He wills—all will be *right;* for the Author of all is infinitely holy! Creatures and things may be varied, strange, even mysterious, in their lot, aspect, and character to me; but, as they come from His holy hands, they must be "all very good." If, therefore, evil ever arise amongst them, it must spring from some *perversion* of His goodness on the part of some accountable beings *resisting* His will; and then, as that will is just the essence of His holiness, no unhappiness nor suffering that may follow rebellion need surprise me or any one else; for God

Himself would become unhappy, were He to become unholy.

Now, you may deny that there is any real *mystery* in all the misery of earth or hell; for there is sin in all that suffer; and *sin*,—let speculators say what they will, and despisers whatever they may,—sin produces both bodily and mental suffering eventually, as surely as summer brings heat, or winter cold. No power, not even Omnipotence itself, can prevent or dissolve the connection between wrong and remorse, guilt and fear, crime and conscious misery, for any great length of time. This is, indeed, a connection established by God; but established by Him, not arbitrarily, nor rashly, but because it would be inevitable in His *own* case, were He to do wrong.

You will not wonder now, that, of all the glories of the Divine character, holiness is the glory which first and chiefly captivates angels,—those lovely beings who, as one well says, "were crowned with holiness in their cradle." They study, indeed, all the Divine perfections, and celebrate each of them in immortal songs; but wherever they begin, they are led to, or end with, the holiness of Jehovah. They evidently see in the omnipotence of God, His "holy arm;" in His omniscience, His "pure eyes;" in His wisdom, His holy mind; in His justice, His holy principles; and in His love, His holy nature and will. Thus each attribute of His character leads the angelic armies to His holiness, as the eternal source, shrine, and centre of all His moral glory and perfect bliss. It is, as it were, the TEMPLE in which they "behold the King in His beauty, in the land afar off."

And they are right. For, were He unholy, there would be "no beauty in Him," that they, or we, should "desire

Him." An unholy God, as we have seen, in all lights, would, to a certainty, be unpitying and implacable; and both capricious and malignant. There could be little chance of even bare justice at His hands, and no reasonable hope for mercy. Indeed, were such a God to *reveal* Himself by words or emblems, His symbols would be only in the red bolts of the thunder, in the fierce wings of the whirlwind, in the flaming surges of the volcano, and in the blasting simoom of the desert. But there is no such God! The true God is thrice holy, or infinitely pure; and, therefore, the emblems of His character are drawn chiefly from the *beauties* of nature; from the gentle dew and the genial rain; from the limpid streams and "the still waters;" from the cheering sun and the sweet stars; from the fertile earth and the smiling heavens. Thus He is imaged in all that is lovely, reflected in all that is fair, endeared by all that is tender, and commended by all that is useful in the universe. As a proof that "He delighteth in mercy," His "tender mercies are over *all* His works," as the azure firmament is over all the earth, or as the Shekinah of glory was over all the mercy-seat. Yes, "over *all* His works,"—wide, vast, boundless, as they are, in the bosom of infinity! How stupendous then, is the *stretch* of the warm wings of benevolence, as they plume themselves over Calvary, and expand over all worlds but *one;* for as they spread in saving mercy over this world, well may we believe that their shadow is love, over all unfallen worlds. Well, "praise the beauties of holiness," give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness! For, it is the beauty of His love; and hence, He provided for us a holy Saviour. It is the beauty of His grace; and hence, He gave the Holy Spirit to both the Church and the

world. It is the beauty of His justice; and hence, the holy law. It is the beauty of His providence; and hence, the ministry of holy angels! For were God not "glorious in holiness," and *fond* of it, and *sure* of its inseparable connection with happiness, He would never have "so loved the world," as to give His Son, or His Spirit, or His Word, or His providence, to restore unholy man to the Divine image, or to the Divine favour. How lovely, therefore, is the holiness of the Divine nature!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE VERACITY OF GOD.

"Rub the diamond of truth, until it *blaze* again."—COLERIDGE.

"The Gospel is not more full or explicit in its promises, to those who comply with it, than in its threatenings against those who reject it."—DR. KNAPP.

"Everything has as much of truth, as it has of essence."—ARISTOT. METAPH.

"Dost thou not know that both God, and man hate a lie? Truly, a lie should be hated not only by God, but by man also. How could a lie be useful to God? Let all speak and believe concerning Him, that He is no deceiver or seducer of others, either by words or works."—PLATO'S REPUBLIC.

"Having undertaken to set before you the whole constellation of God's glorious attributes, I must not, dare not, hide this so glittering star; but shall endeavour to show you that God is a *rock* of truth as well as justice."—BEVERIDGE.

WHEN the great and good JANSEN, whom *Pascal* admired and *Fenelon* loved, and who was the father of the Jansenists, was asked, because of his profound and sweet solemnity of spirit, what attribute of God was most present to his mind, whilst his heart was fullest of holy awe, he replied, "The truth or veracity of God." One of his biographers says, that he was often seen to pause in solitary walks in the garden and grounds of YPRES, and to look up to the heavens with a fixed gaze, exclaiming in tones of deep emotion, "O, TRUTH!"

It is not common to be thus riveted and penetrated by the *truthfulness* of God, although upon that depends the truth of whatever we know of God, and of all the pro-

mises of both grace and glory. This is a sad proof that but little deep interest is felt, in either the rich grace, or the radiant glory set before us in the Gospel. We have nothing for the truth of either, but just the *word* of God. All we hope for in time and eternity depends wholly upon its being "impossible for God to lie."

This is really a very solemn consideration to a thoughtful mind, in a world where the *word* of so few can be safely depended upon. The prevalence of falsehood and insincerity amongst mankind ought not, indeed, to awaken any suspicion of the truth or sincerity of God; but it ought, certainly, to make all who care anything about what they believe, look well into the grounds of their belief, and at their reasons for taking the Word of God on points of infinite and eternal importance. This is the more necessary because very few will take God's word, even when it is a direct promise, for anything *temporal*, which they care much about. His word, for any worldly good, goes for very little when nothing else gives probability to the prospect. Accordingly, hardly any man begins life by seeking, *first*, "the kingdom of God and His righteousness," although God has promised that His providence shall add to that grace whatever temporal blessings are really good for us. This notorious and shameful fact made the old Puritans say, "It is easier to trust God for a crown of glory, than for a crust of bread." There is much solemn and humbling truth in this quaint saying. The "crown of life" is not an immediate want, although it be immortal distinction; whereas, when a man has nothing to look to for a livelihood but just the promise that

"The Lord will provide,"

he finds out that his faith is not very strong. "Godliness

hath the promise of the life that now is" as well as of "that which is to come;" but not a man in a thousand thinks the first part of that promise worth much. It might include nothing but "bread and water." Indeed, even those who pay some regard to it, see no more in it than just a pledge that they shall not exactly *want* the real necessaries of life. Hence, the almost universal inclination and endeavour to have something more *tangible* than the bare and indefinite promise of God, to go upon. Even a small bank-credit, or an ordinary investment, or a marketable article, is far more depended upon by the generality, than the faithfulness of providence to the fearers of God, although no man can make life, health, property, or success in business, a *whit* surer by any human resource he has, or can get.

Look at this fact calmly. It would certainly be very foolish, and sinful too, for any man who can work to fold up his hands and talk of Providence providing for his wants. Providence will let the idle starve. He is "reckoning without his host," however, and is equally presumptuous too, who thinks that his own head and hands leave but little for Providence to do, in his case. He is as much at the mere *will* of God, as if he had neither a penny nor a friend in the world. He is, in fact, more at *haphazard* than the very poorest Christian; for, having taken his affairs into his own hands, and upon his own head, without any regard to what God promises or threatens, he has no Divine security for even "bread and water;" much less for the lot he is in, or for the point he is aiming at. A *word* from God against him would upset all in a moment, in spite of him, little and lightly as he thinks of God's word for temporal things. Such men think that the

promise of the life that now is, and the profit of godliness, amount to nothing worth working or living for; but they forget that an earthly portion got at the expense of neglecting God, may soon be *neglected* by God, and thus suddenly lost; or, what is far worse, may be left by God to become such another curse as the wealth of Dives.

I thus glance at the little meaning, and the less faith, usually given to God's promise of things pertaining to this life, that you may see exactly what *weight* that promise has with you; and thus discern whether your trust in the truth of God for spiritual and eternal things arises from caring *less* about them than for your temporal interests. You have nothing but the word of God for all, or any, of the things that belong to your eternal peace; and, therefore, if His word do not go *far* with you for temporal things, it may be that it is not so much His word as your own *wish*, you trust, when hoping for salvation. This deserves and requires to be looked into; for it is one thing to take for granted that God "will give grace and glory," and another to take His word for them. How can I give myself credit for either loving or believing what God says about eternal life, if I think that His promises about "the life that now is" amount to very little, and form no great security against want in this world? If this be my opinion, it proves one of two things against me;—either that I care more about this life than for that which is to come; or, that I do not give God credit for caring much about my temporal welfare. I am not at all inclined to puzzle you or myself with over-nice questions, or distinctions; but still, I cannot hide from myself the fact, that God's word goes for very little, so far as it promises anything about this world; and, there-

fore, there is strong reason to suspect that it is not so honoured or trusted in hoping for eternal redemption, as it seems to be. Again, therefore, I remind you and myself, that we have nothing but His promise to depend upon, for either soul or body, time or eternity. Everything hangs, for both worlds, upon the single link of His faithfulness. Could that fail, all in heaven might fall, and none on earth either rise to glory, or find grace to help, or get providence to guard!

Well might Jansen pause often in his walks, and exclaim, "O, truth!" God's truthfulness is to the world what the law of gravitation is to the universe of worlds, the sole security. Were it possible that God could *lie*, it would be more than possible that providence, grace, and glory, might break down in one promiscuous ruin, to rise no more for ever! But it is impossible for God to lie or mislead; and, therefore, not one good word, of all that He hath spoken to them that fear Him, shall ever fail, or be forgotten. Both the heavens and the earth may pass away, but not one iota of the Divine word can fall to the ground, or vanish. Well might Jeremiah pause even in the midst of his *Lamentations* and make the muffled harp of Judah sing, "Great is Thy faithfulness." David saw this, and sang, "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens, and Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the skies." Ethan, the Ezrahite, also exclaimed, "Thy faithfulness shalt Thou establish in the very heavens. Who is a strong Lord like unto Thee, and to Thy faithfulness round about Thee?" Psa. lxxxix. 2, 8.

The expression, "Thy faithfulness *round about* Thee," is highly figurative, but sublimely emphatic, whether it mean the same as the words, "Faithfulness shall be the

girdle of His loins," or refer to all things around the throne of God, as pledges of His veracity. If the former, then it is an emblem taken, not from the ordinary girdle of the Orientals, which binds their robes; but from the military belt of the warrior, which braces his strength for battle; and thus the figure conveys the fact, that truth is the immutability of omnipotence. The pledge is equally complete, however, and more splendid, if we understand it to mean, that everything around God in heaven, is a specimen of His own sincerity and veracity. Now, what is there *around* His eternal throne that is not truthful? That throne itself is "for ever and ever." The lamps before it, and the rainbow around it, never fail or fade. All the innumerable company of angels, which encircle it with ceaseless Hallelujahs, never weary in celebrating the truth, as well as the holiness of Jehovah; nor in rejoicing whenever a sinner repents on earth by believing the word of God. So also, not one spirit of all the general assembly of the just, but is a specimen of the Divine fidelity. Their very number and perfection prove to us, how true God was to the promises upon which they leaned whilst here; and their ever new song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," allowed and loved as it still is by God, and warbled as it is by all the harps of the angelic hierarchy, demonstrates that the oracle, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," is as true now, as when it awoke the echoes of "the holy mount," and crowned the glories of the transfiguration. And, best and brightest of all the proofs of faithfulness, around God in immortal and immutable forms, is the Saviour Himself, as a priest, shepherd, and king, the same in truth, grace, and love, as when He tabernacled on earth, and died to save us.

These are all pledges as well as illustrations of the Divine fidelity. In heaven, we see everywhere, not only that God *can* do all that is promised in the Bible, but also that He is both willing and delighted to fulfil His promises and keep His covenant. Nor are the proofs of this confined to the pledges immediately around the throne of God.

"The glorious universe around" Him is full of strong proofs of His truthfulness. Hence He Himself appeals to the steadiness and regularity of "the stars in their courses," as emblems of His faithfulness; thus, "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold; who bringeth forth their host by number? He calleth them all by their names, not one faileth." Isa. xl. 26. When Isaiah obeyed this sublime summons, he considered the stars as attentively as Abraham did, when God pointed him to them as pledges of the promises; for the prophet, like the patriarch, was then pondering the coming of the Saviour, as well as the captivity of the Church; and thus needed to see how the *word* that "binds the sweet influences of the Pleiades, and looses the bands of Orion, and brings forth Mazzaroth in his season, and guides Arcturus with his sons," Job xxxviii. 31, 32, would bring the Jews out of Babylon, and Christ into the world; or, to express it as Watts does, how

> "The voice that rolls the stars along
> Speaks all the promises."

This is God's favourite way of illustrating His own faithfulness. Hence, when He revealed to Jeremiah the riches of mercy and grace in the promises of the new and everlasting covenant, He appealed at once to the heavens, as exhibiting proofs of His fidelity;—"Thus saith the

Lord who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night; If those ordinances depart from before Me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel shall cease from being a nation before Me. If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will cast off the house of Israel; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more." Jer. xxxi. 35. All this has held good to all the *spiritual* Israel of God, ever since the new covenant came into force, by "the death of the Testator."

It deserves special attention, however, that it is revelation which makes nature thus a voucher for the Divine veracity. Apart from the Bible, creation itself does not prove that God is faithful. The rainbow is no pledge against a second deluge, apart from the covenant given to Noah. Rain and dew become proofs of God's truthfulness only as the promise of harvests, and of the success of the Gospel, make them so. Shut the Bible, and that moment all the order and stability of the earth and heavens vouch for nothing, but just the *likelihood* that they may go on as they have done. For as they utter no promises of either grace or providence to man, they cannot prove that "it is impossible for God to lie."

Let me illustrate this. I know a dukedom, not more splendid by its mansion and avenues than beautiful by cottages festooned with roses, and surrounded with gardens, and sheltered with woods. As such, the scene proves the *taste* of the noble owner. No one can doubt his taste who sees his grounds. But they are no proofs of his truth or integrity to a stranger. I know, however, that those embowered cottages are as much intended by him to

encourage honest industry as to please his eye; and thus they are proofs, to all who know him, that he is thoroughly sincere in what he says about industry, and true to his promise of rewarding it. He planned and built these sweet abodes, to prove to his tenantry the truth of what he had often told them, that their comfort depends upon good habits. Now, just so, creation is vocal with attestations to the truth of the promises and the sincerity of God. The mighty and stedfast laws of nature vouch for the constancy of all the principles of grace and glory. Grace and gravitation are equally from the will of God. He no more changes His plan or purpose of saving freely and fully all that come unto Him by Christ Jesus, than His rule of binding planets to their suns, and suns to the magnetic centre of gravity. That magnetic influence which links world to world, and all to the throne of God, is not freer, nor more sufficient to the least, in common with the greatest orbs of the sky, than the grace of the Gospel is to any one and every one on earth who seeks it for holy purposes. The early and latter rain, and the refreshing dew, with the sunshine that precedes and follows them, are not surer to the husbandman than eternal life is to all who sow "unto the Spirit" in their hearts the good seed "of the Word." The place or position of our world, in relation to the sun of its system, is not more favourable or fixed, than its moral position towards the Sun of righteousness; for He still arises with healing in His wings upon all the fearers of God. In a word, so sure are all the great and precious promises, as "yea and amen in Christ," that God speaks of their permanency as greater than that of universal nature itself. "The heavens and the earth may pass away;" "the mountains may

depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy upon thee." Isa. liv. 10. Thus, if all our interests for both time and eternity hang upon the truthfulness of God, they hang by even a stronger chain than that which sustains the universe.

These reasonings proceed all along upon the supposition that it is *desirable* that the oracles of God should be as true and unchangeable as the laws of nature. Now, is this desirable? Are we glad of it? Remember, God's *threatenings* are just as true as His promises. He will abide by the principle, that "whosoever believeth shall be saved;" but He will abide also by the principle, that whosoever believeth shall not perish. He will never swerve from the rule that "the pure in heart shall see God;" but neither will He from the rule that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." He will never alter the promise of rewarding His faithful servants; but neither will He alter the threatenings of "outer darkness," as the eternal doom of slothful and unprofitable servants! Thus the *dark* side of the pillar of revelation is as true as the bright side; the EBAL of the curse is as much "a mountain of brass," as the GERIZIM of the blessing; hell is as much a reality as heaven; for the word of God must not be taken in half, but as a whole.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF GOD.

"God co-exists with all the points of time, in time; but as a rock in the rolling waves of the sea, or as a tower in a torrent of gliding water, unmoved; or as the *gnomon* of a dial, firm amidst the fleeting hours."—GILL ON PLATO.

"That essence, which is beauty itself, equality itself, admits of no mutation. Dost thou think that God varies, or is sometimes this, and sometimes that? It is impossible He should wish to change Himself, seeing He is most excellent. Whatever is changed, is so either for the better or the worse. If for the worse, it becomes bad. If for the better, it was bad at first."—PLATO.

"Though we be weak, and all external things frail and transitory, by depending on Him, we rise, as it were, above ourselves, above time and the world, and thus partake in some measure of His unchangeableness."—DR. JORTIN.

'Immutability is a glory belonging to all the Divine perfections; the centre wherein they all unite; the *enamel* of them all."—CHARNOCK.

WHEN David said, "This God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death," he as much declared the Divine immutability, as when he said to God and of Christ, the "heavens shall perish and be changed; but Thou shalt endure the same, and Thy years shall have no end," Psa. cii. 26. Even James did not declare it more, when he called God "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, nor the shadow of turning." These two oracles are, indeed, more figurative and philosophic than the first,—for that of James is astronomical in a very high sense; but the first, although perfectly simple, calls for more thought than either of the other two. A mere

astronomer, no doubt, would think most about them, and divide his wonder between the scientific language of James, who says, literally, that "with God is no parallax nor tropical shadow;" and the popular language of David, who, like Peter, foretells a fiery deluge that will change all sublunary things. But wondering how James got his science, or what David and Peter mean by the final conflagration, is not *realising* the unchangeableness of God for any practical or inspiring purpose. It is, indeed, impressive to realise "God in grandeur, and the world on fire;" or, unchanged, whilst all things are changing around Him; and this solemn scene ought to be far more anticipated than it is. But still, useful as "looking for the day of the Lord, when the heavens shall be on fire," would be, in bringing home the question, "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; seeing ye look for such things?" it is not the best way of bringing home to the mind an abiding and cheering sense of the Divine unchangeableness. As Charnock says, that is "a glory belonging to all the Divine perfections." It should, therefore, be remembered and realised vividly, whenever we think of any one of them. And it may be so, more easily and profitably than some seem to suppose, or than you imagine at first sight.

There is, indeed, a cold abstraction, which becomes a reckless logic, not uncommon nor unnatural on this subject. There are men who talk, and men who are silent, about God's unchangeable purposes and love, who are alike, *clutching* at some secret security for their salvation, because they dislike to give "all diligence to make their calling and election sure." They see nothing in the *revealed* will of God that warrants them to hope in *spite*

of their heedless and heartless course of life; and, therefore, they dream of some unchangeable decree or design that may save them, without sanctifying them. "My soul, come not thou into *their* secret!" That is worse than Mahômetan *fatalism*, bad as that is. But still, no perversion of a great truth, nor any tendency to pervert it, should prevent us from either studying or remembering it; for, in itself, it is both good and has a good tendency, however double-minded men may abuse it. Now, whatever were David's faults, and they were neither few nor small,—he did not play *tricks* with revealed truth, in order to evade his duty, or hush up his fears. He gloried in the unchangeableness of God, not as an abstract quality or necessity of the Divine nature, that tied up either the hands or the heart of God; but as a moral excellence, that gives its own immutability to whatever else God is, or has promised to do, to them that fear Him. It was of God, as "great, and greatly to be praised," as keeping His "right hand full of righteousness," as well as His heart full of "lovingkindness," as a "terror" to His enemies, as well as "refuge" to His friends,—in a word, it was of Jehovah as the God of Zion, that David sang, "THIS God is our God for ever and ever," Psa. xlviii. So also, it is of God, as "the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every *good* gift and every *perfect* gift," that James says, "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Neither David nor James connected unchangeableness with any views of God, but just the views God has given of Himself, in His own Word. Hence, the Divine immutability had both a holy and sweet influence upon them. And it never can have a bad influence, but upon men who either put out the lights, or overlook the lights,

that God has kindled around Himself. He is "the Father of these lights" only, and unchangeable to man according to that character and spirit which they give of Him. He will not, therefore, recognise any lights but those of His own kindling, nor give the benefit of His own immutability to any man who shuts his eyes upon the lamps of revelation, or upon the practical design of their light.

You cannot give too much heed to this fact. You live in a world, where the unchangeableness of God, when it is either thought of or spoken of by the ungodly, is treated as an *arbitrary* thing. They say, in a bitter or reckless spirit, "He is of *one* mind, and who can *turn* Him?" "Why doth He yet find fault; for who hath resisted His will?" But, what is the fact itself? Why, that God is of that "*one mind*," which He has revealed; and, if He will not "*turn*" from it, it is because no change in it could alter it for the better, to either Himself or us. Hence Job did not complain of that oneness of mind, in a bitter spirit. Oh, they do not study His "one mind," who wish that they could "turn Him" from it, or that He would change it! But it shall not be my fault, if you do not study it. You *shall* rejoice in the unchangeableness of the God of our fathers, if you have any regard for Him.

Now little as the Jews care or know about Jehovah, as the God of their fathers, in the sense dearest to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, His unchangeableness is still revered by them, notwithstanding all the changes He has made in their lot, religion, and government. An intelligent Jew will yet quote the oracle, "I am the Lord, I change not." He will argue also, like Rabbi Joseph Alba, in the Sepher *Ikkarim*, that change is inconsistent with the *simplicity* of

the Divine essence; which being self-existent, and thus necessarily existent, can have no cause in itself for changing; nor beyond itself, to change it. c. 5. But this is cold reasoning, although cogent. Indeed, no reasoning I have ever read—not even CHARNOCK'S—splendid, profound, and practical as it is, to a degree that even an angel would not think unworthy of himself—comes home to my understanding or heart with anything like the power of the simple, but sublime oracle, "THIS GOD is our God for ever and ever!" Weigh the oracle. It is God, as He has revealed Himself in His Word;—and thus, as He is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself,—that will be the *same* for ever and ever. Now, this is no abstract, nor abstruse, nor vague, nor cold view of God. It is clear, vital, and inspiring. It brings the beatific vision of Him in heaven before the mind, not so much as a dazzling sight of matchless and mysterious glory, as an endearing sight, "altogether lovely!"—of paternal wisdom, tenderness, and majesty. It brings before the mind also the character in which God is always the same now, and here; or, for ever, just what He is, as the God of salvation.

Thus, it depends entirely upon what we think of God—or upon the lights in which we view Him, whether His unchangeableness please or displease us. A man who looks at nothing in God, but just what is threatening to sin and worldliness, cannot take pleasure in the immutability of that threatening aspect. He will try to forget it, even at the expense of forgetting those parts of the Divine character that He cannot wish altered;—for, whoever will shut his eyes against God's unchangeable hatred of both sin and worldliness, dare not open his eyes upon God's delight in showing mercy. At least, no such man can *see*

the flaming sword of justice, and the golden sceptre of mercy, equally near to Him at the same time. Accordingly, unless he *antinomianise* himself into a reckless presumer, he cannot keep his sins, and yet apply to himself the oracle, "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting;" for "His mercy endureth for ever" only "to them that fear Him;" and, therefore, only by them can its unchangeableness be either realised or contemplated with any pleasure.

It is equally true also, that the unchangeableness of God, as to His natural perfections, much as depends upon it throughout the universe, will not engage much attention from any man who takes but little interest in the moral perfections of God. Indeed, there is nothing very wonderful in the idea that God should remain for ever in "one mind," and in the same relation, to universal nature, which He now sustains, until we take into account the *provocations* He has to bear for ever from our world, where both the order and bounty of nature are perverted into excuses for neglecting Him, and not seldom into weapons of insult. Accordingly, I never met yet in the course of my reading with even one expression of holy *wonder*, on the part of any philosopher, that the laws of nature are unchangeable on *earth*, as well as in the heavens. The fact is, no philosophy, as such, not even in the best of it, deals at all yet with either moral or eternal considerations, or connects the holiness of God with the government of nature, even when it admires His goodness and adores His wisdom. Macculloch is hardly an exception to this, devotional as his spirit is; and even Dr. Pye Smith has made no one wonder, with holy awe, that the thrice

holy Jehovah should not change the laws of nature on earth, for the worse; seeing their rich products of beauty and bounty are so generally turned against both the service and salvation of God; and seeing too, that these great and good men revere the moral government of God, and recognise His hand in *catastrophes* which disturbed the course of nature here. O, when will some Christian of high intellect set himself to *master* all science, in order to connect it all, not only with *a* God, nor merely with Deity in the abstract, but with the revealed God of salvation? For it is as "God in Christ reconciling this world unto Himself," that He is the God of all worlds, and the governor of universal nature. "All things visible and invisible" are in subjection to Christ, because Christ died for man, that all intelligent creatures, as well as man, might be taught "the manifold wisdom of God," as it hates sin and loves holiness, infinitely and unchangeably. It is not meant by these remarks, to say or insinuate that the immutability of Deity is not a glorious fact to our best philosophers. No man who believes in a *governing* Creator, and thus in the insufficiency of nature to sustain or perpetuate itself, can do otherwise than rejoice that the arm of omnipotence never wearies nor weakens, that the eye of omniscience never decays nor dims, that the paternal sympathies and condescension of God never decline; for the bare idea of any change in any of His perfections is terrific, because, were change once to begin, no one could tell where it would stop, nor what it would ruin first. But still, impressive as this consideration is, it does not *endear* the unchangeableness of God to the heart, as man most needs to love it and lean upon it. God's unchangeableness in reference to universal

nature is no proof, any farther than He has made it so, that "His mercy endureth for ever," or that "His faithfulness shall not fail," or that His "lovingkindness shall be everlasting." This invariableness of the Father of lights is shown to a certainty only by the light of His Word; for neither the everlasting mountains, nor the perpetual hills, nor the massive rocks,—no, nor the uniform frame of nature,—prove anything positive or probable, as to either the riches or the duration of His mercy, until these "strongholds" of creation are lighted up with lamps from the glorious Gospel; or, like "the sea of glass before the throne," reflect the glory of the Lamb in the midst of the throne.

It is, then, the immutable and immovable character of God, as the God of salvation, that we most need to understand and realise, because that includes both the grace and providence, without which we can neither be safe nor happy in this world or the next. Although, therefore, it be pleasant, yea, almost inspiring, to conclude from the unchangeableness of the Eternal Mind, that the great laws of nature will both preserve and regulate the universe for ever, and until the end of time in this world, yet what is all this, grand as it is, if we be not guided here by "His counsel, and afterwards received into glory"? I want—and do not you?—to be kept as steadily in the narrow way that leadeth to heaven, as the planets are kept in their orbits. I want—and do not you?—to be kept as safe from both the evil of the world and the fiery darts of Satan, as the stars are preserved from the shock of comets. I want—and do not you?—to be kept as true to the throne of God as the centre of happiness, as the sun is to the *centre* of gravity. I want—and do not you?—that there

should be a seed-time and harvest of holiness in my character, as regular as the spring and autumn of nature. In a word, I want—and do not you?—to be as much under the unchangeable laws of grace, as the universe is under the law of gravitation; that thus I may unite in the song of the Church, "This God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death!" But the God who has promised to be and do all this, has promised it, not to those who only believe in *a* God, nor to those who merely own His providence, nor to those who try to merit His mercy; but to those alone who fear and love Him for His *own reasons*, as well as for their own interests. Now His reasons for guiding here and glorifying hereafter are all founded upon the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. It is only of "God in Christ," that any one is warranted or allowed to say, "This God is *our* God for ever and ever;" and no one is warranted to say so who is unwilling to be *guided* by His counsel until death, or to be His eternal debtor for eternal life. But, on the other hand, whoever loves "Him because He first loved us, and sent His Son to die for us," is welcome as well as warranted to sing, "Thou wilt guide me by Thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory."

Now, this is the "one mind," from which no one and nothing "can turn" God. It is God, as "this God," that is without variableness or the shadow of turning.

In all senses, indeed, in which He is God, He is unchangeable. But still His unchangeable love is only to them that love Him as the God of salvation. To them alone, God has unalterably pledged providence, grace, and glory. There is, therefore, no change on His part, of either plan or purpose, when those who seemed to love

Him cease to do so, and thus are *left* by Him. Giving up those who give Him up is, indeed, unchangeable adherence to His own revealed rule of acting. "Every branch that beareth not fruit He taketh away." God never promised nor intended to preserve barren branches from burning; and, therefore, their fate only confirms the truth of His threatenings.

All His immutability, in reference to mere nominal branches of the true vine, regards their rejection, just as surely as it regards the *pruning*, and thus the preservation of fruitful branches. It is, therefore, both the wildest and worst of all speculations, to imagine that God may have purposed, and thus immutably pledged Himself, to save certain branches, although barren. Had He, indeed, ever formed such a purpose, or cherished such an intention, it would, no doubt, and as a matter of course, be as unchangeable as anything else He ever set His heart upon. But there can be no such purpose in the Eternal Mind, in favour of an *unholy* man, because all the children of God are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, and fore-ordained to good works, and chosen unto holiness; and thus, a decree or design to save any man *in* his sins, whilst the whole family of God must be saved *from* their sins, would be, in effect, both a lie and a libel against the grand purpose of God in redemption. In a word, it will not do,—it is, indeed, daring insult,—to strike out speculative lights, in order to form cheap and easy hopes, and then, to shift these lazy wishes in amongst the unalterable designs of God, as if He must adopt them because a clever logic can make out that, if such *be* the will of God, it must come to pass, "as sure as fate." By this *time, you* see for yourself, that we must be of *one* mind

with God, concerning both Christ and holiness, if we would have the benefit of the eternal *oneness* of His mind. For, just as it is not *any* god of the heathen that can be their God for ever and ever, or their guide unto death; so the true God will not be so to us, but in His true character, which is, His revealed character. But, on the other hand, if we must take up with "this God," whom the saints of all ages chose as their God, and whose glory shines brightest in the face of Jesus, and whose will is in His Word only, surely there is no hardship in being thus shut up to Him. "This God," is the God of salvation! This God is equally fit to be our guide until death, and our portion for evermore. His being of "one mind" unchangeably, ought to commend Him to every thoughtful mind; for it leaves no room nor reason, now that His one mind is known, to fear any change in the grounds of hope, or in the rules of duty.

Weigh this fact. Were God changeable, as to either His plans or laws, on earth, or in heaven, neither worship nor pleasure could go on well amongst saints or angels, even if the alterations He made, from time to time, were not capricious. It is impossible not to see, that the calm complacency of heavenly worship and joy, arises very much from the persuasion that none of the songs of heaven will ever be set aside, and none of its harps be ever unstrung, and none of its fountains of happiness ever be sealed up. New sources of enjoyment may be added to the present, as eternity goes on; but none of the present will be superseded by them, or grow old. It is, therefore, the very *composure*, as well as rapture, of all around the throne, as they look upon unveiled Deity, and drink in perfect bliss from the beatific vision, to say to themselves

and to each other, "This God is our God for ever and ever!" Thus His being of one mind, that none can turn, and that He will not change, makes eternity, to them, one unbroken and unbounded prospect of perfect peace and joy. And this is just as true on earth, and as applicable to the fearers of God now; for He is as much of "one mind," in the reign of grace, as in the reign of glory. He will as much guide us in "the narrow way" here, as He guides the redeemed in heaven to living fountains of waters. He will no more forsake or leave a humble follower of the Lamb in the wilderness, than a spirit before the throne.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MEDIATORIAL PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

"Seeing God is so careful for you, why should you give way to care?"—SOCRATES.

"Since providence is the management of God, we should neither be proud in prosperity, nor distrustful in adversity."—SOHNI.

"The Father perfected all things, and delivered them over to the *second* mind."—ZOROASTER. *Chald. Phil.*

"Whatever happens to a good man is best for him. Let us persuade this young man, that He, who by His providence takes care of the *whole*, in order to conserve and adorn it, doth wisely regulate *all* things to this end. The force and efficacy of His providence penetrate all the parts of the universe, according to their nature."—PLATO.

"All events are providential, or *derive* from the hand of Providence; but all do not carry such visible marks of His hand."—TUCKER.

"Jesus lays open to the inspection of His disciples the volume of providence, and, turning to each one in succession, shows him that in that volume *each* has a page."—DR. HARRIS.

"Do not think that thou hast less love from God, because thou hast less allowance than some. His love may be as much, and is often more acted, in giving a penny, than in giving a talent. If thou art a child of God, and thy portion but a penny, it hath upon it the image and superscription of a father's love."—CARYL ON JOB.

THE preservation and government of all things are not less demonstrative of "the eternal power" of the Godhead, than the creation of all things. We are naturally most struck with the *creative* act of omnipotence, because it brought matter and mind into being, out of nothing, as well as stamped their character, at once; but now that they exist, and can be somewhat worked upon by ourselves, or

turned by strength and skill to not a few of our own purposes, it is not exactly a mystery or a wonder to us, that Divine power and wisdom can wield them all, agreeably to the Divine will, and thus conducively to the Divine glory.

But, as we can make nothing out of nonentity, it is both wonderful and mysterious to us, that even Omnipotence could *tell* with as much effect upon utter nothing, in creating all things at first, as it now does in governing them. We have no *semblance* of such power; nor should we have one, could chemistry solidify air, as frost congeals the water, until art could quarry in the atmosphere, and carve ether like marble; for even then science would have some matter, as the basis of her operations. But still, providence, although less wonderful than creation, inasmuch as it has something to work upon and with, has so much to do, in preserving and governing universal nature, and especially in ruling the universe of minds, that the knowledge and wisdom implied in making "all things work," and all things work "together," and all things work together "for good," are not much less wonderful than the power that made all things out of nothing. For, they are so many, and so varied, and the world of mind is so changeable, that the very *knowledge* of men and things, seems as if it must be as burdensome as it is vast, and as vexatious as it is essential.

This difficulty was deeply felt by the ancient sages, who maintained, against the Epicureans, the doctrine of providence; for they had found knowledge hard to obtain, and to retain, in their own case; and thus, as they could not deny the fact, it devolved upon them to prove that God *took such* knowledge of all things, as providence implies,

without impairing His own happiness, or disturbing His composure. And in nothing, perhaps, did they ever argue better; and no wonder. They had a very powerful *public* motive, for thinking deeply, and for reasoning well. The Epicurean philosophy struck at the very vitals of both morals and society. Its leading principle was, that

> "Whatsoe'er's Divine must live in peace,
> In undisturb'd and everlasting ease.
> Nought here below, nought in our power it needs,
> Nor smiles at good, nor frowns at wicked deeds.—*Lucretius.*

This maxim was death to both personal and social morality, and thus subversive of all government. Well therefore, might any man, who valued any kind of public or private virtue,—and especially men who had influence with governments, set themselves to argue down this fatal maxim. Plato did so, and nobly too. No theologian should be reluctant to acknowledge this fact, nor ignorant of it. Paul did not hesitate to quote a heathen poet at Athens, when preaching providence on Mars' Hill, although he knew well that *Aratus* meant Jupiter, in the hymn containing the words, "For we are also His offspring." "This," says *Calvin*, "ought not to have hindered Paul from retaining a true maxim, though it was combined with fables." And if neither the astrology nor the idolatry of Aratus withheld Paul from quoting him, when proving to the Athenians, that in God "we live, and move, and have our being," much less should the errors of Plato consign his splendid advocacy of providence to oblivion. He was, indeed, a polytheist; or believed in "gods many and lords many," as well as in a supreme God; for it is quite a mistake, in fact, a misrepresentation, to give Plato credit for despising the popular gods in his heart; but still, his polytheism did not exactly lower the

supreme God in his estimation. He both saw and showed, that the Eternal Mind must be *intuitively* acquainted with all things, and could embrace them all in *one* idea; and thus could feel neither pain nor perplexity in governing them. The profound maxim "that knowledge subsists according to the nature that *knows*, and not according to the nature *known*;" or that God knows according to His own infinite essence,—is not Plato's, as a maxim; nor does it belong to his eloquent successor, Proclus, but to Jamblichus; yet its *spirit* regulates Plato's demonstrations of Divine providence.

I have a weighty *practical* reason for apprising you of what that myriad-minded heathen, Plato, said of providence attending to *small* as well as to great things in human affairs. You live in times, when both senatorial and editorial sciolists speak of providence, as if it attended to nothing but the stars, and interfered on earth only when a dynasty was to be overthrown, or a nation revolutionised. Such men set up for philosophers, and sneer at those who believe that God "careth for" individuals or families. Now, it is vain to quote Scripture to such sceptics. The DEVIL might be shamed into silence and flight, as he once was in the wilderness, by an apt oracle of God, in answer to impieties; but *texts* are lost upon sneerers, until the sneer is made to succumb to common sense, or to a commanding name, apart from revelation. Should you, therefore, ever be called upon to rebuke the ribaldry of "vain talkers," who cannot, like the Devil, be shamed by your saying, "It is written," remind them that Plato did not reason, as if *small* things were unworthy of the Divine notice, or below the care of Providence. He *argued that* the great whole of the universe, could not be

well managed, if the *parts* were neglected. And he argued thus;—"Builders say, that great stones cannot be well laid, without little stones." "Artists, also, the more skilful they are, the more perfect care they bestow upon the small as well as the great points in their works." "Physicians, also, whose province it is to care for the whole system, do they expect the whole to be in good condition, if they neglect any part?"—LAWS, x. B. And should you be asked why Plato reasoned thus, refer to his chief commentator, *Proclus*, who did not go beyond his master, when he said, "If we deprive the gods of providence, we deprive them of goodness. By depriving them of goodness, we subvert their very existence. By every necessity, therefore, goodness is consequent to their being. It thus follows that they do not neglect providential watchfulness, from indolence, imbecility, or ignorance; and, therefore, they possess perfect knowledge, undefiled power, and unenvying will?"—*Proclus on Providence.*

It will readily occur to you, from these specimens, that the Platonists, although polytheists, held in supreme contempt all the popular fables about the wars and vices of the gods. So also, they rose superior to the fatalism of the Stoics, and distinguished between fate and providence. Plato himself rebuts with scorn, the idea that submission to the Divine will, involved *slavery* to it. Voluntary servitude to the celestial powers is, he maintains, "the perfection of liberty; because, by serving them, we become assimilated to them; and, *winged*, rule with them."

It is thus that the best heathenism of antiquity rebukes not a little of the scepticism of our modern philosophers.

Their own oracles, as well as "the oracles of God," give the *lie* to their insinuations against Providence. Socrates and Plato, as well as Paul, would have charged them with "profane and vain babbling." Plato did address such men, thus: "But thou, indeed, being carried away with blind and rash frenzy, because unable to belch forth thine indignation against God Himself, or to make the venom of thine enraged mind reach Him, dost fall into the humour of admitting that there is a God, and yet denying that He superintends human affairs."—LAWS, x. B.

I am neither teaching nor tempting you to think too highly of even the best heathen philosophy, by thus apprising you of what is good in Plato, but that you may know what to think when our philosophers call it unphilosophical to believe in a special Providence; and what to say, when all that Socrates and Plato taught is called foolishness. And now, if you *must* say,

"Plato, thou reasonest well,"

so far as the doctrine of providence is concerned, remember he reasoned thus, from mere hints or vague traditions, which were but the dying echoes of the primitive oracles of God on the subject. How well, therefore, ought we to reason on Providence, seeing we have it explained to us in the sermons, and illustrated by the miracles, and concentrated in the mediatorial sceptre of the Saviour? O, let not the Platonists "rise up in judgment, and condemn you!" We shall soon see that all Providence is *officially* conducted by the Saviour Himself; and thus, that it has infinite claims upon both our confidence and submission; because, in His hands it is "power over all things," in order to "give eternal life," and in order to make "all things work together for good to them that love God;"

for, under the Gospel, all moral government is *mediatorial* also.

And now, if you understand this hint, you will not wonder when I say, that I had a deeper and weightier practical reason for quoting Plato and Proclus, than just to enable you to repel the cavils of sceptics. You have youth on your side, and thus have both time and power to *unlearn* the unscriptural modes of speaking about Providence, which are so common even in this land of Bibles; and so difficult to drop or avoid when one has grown old: whereas you may, and therefore ought to, form the habit of speaking and thinking only, or chiefly as Christ and His apostles did; for there is not a little of "the old leaven" of heathenism in the "lump" of both our popular phrases and feelings on this subject. The words, fate and fortune, luck and chance, accident and lot, are *rank* heathenism, as they are currently used; and they keep up in the public mind, an idea of *haphazard* utterly at variance with both the wisdom and authority of paternal providence. This is so far felt by serious Christians, that they are for ever checking themselves, and qualifying them by the parenthesis, "were it proper to speak so." But thus they do speak; nor does the qualifying clause counteract the mischief. "Good luck and bad luck;" lucky and unlucky days, as *notions*, are almost as influential as the stars of astrology, or even the fates of idolatry once were. This is unworthy of a Christian, or even of a man of common sense. Neither may mean anything wrong by using these words; but the prevalence of the words keeps up the superstition, and keeps down a sense of dependence upon God.

There is also a common way of speaking about Divine

Providence, which, although *devout* in its spirit, is not a little heathenish in its form, for it has often just as little direct reference to Jesus Christ as the reasonings of Plato or Proclus. Providence might be, indeed, with many, a system of Divine management that has no necessary or moral connection with the reign of grace, or the mediatorial government of Christ. Accordingly, they imagine that they may *stand well*, or keep upon good terms, with Providence, although they both disobey the Gospel and neglect the Saviour. It seems never to occur to them, that He has anything *particular* to do with their life, health, or affairs, whilst they are pushing their way in the world, and pleading the cares of the world against compliance with His claims. Indeed, they evidently think that they have nothing to do with Christ until they can find time to come to Him for salvation. Till then they satisfy themselves, as they phrase it, with "trusting in Providence, and not making Providence their enemy." You could hardly surprise such persons more than by hinting to them, that there is *no* Providence apart from the Saviour, or that is *not* administered by Him. But, perhaps, you yourself are somewhat surprised at this assertion, and even doubt both its wisdom and truth. For you may have learned "from your youth up," that Providence was peculiarly, if not exclusively, the FATHER'S department in the Divine government. And even now, your first thought may be that Providence rules and overrules where Christ is not at all known, very much as it does in Christendom or at home.

Now I am not likely to dispute this fact, for I admire, as well as remember, what Paul said to the Lycaonians,—that God had not left Himself "without witness," in any

heathen nation, inasmuch "as He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons," Acts xiv. 17. This is literally and universally true still in all heathen lands. Even upon the "seven hills of Rome," where Popery is almost as unlike the Gospel as the Paganism of the old empire was; and all around the Lake of Geneva, where the Reformation is scorned by most, Providence is more visible, in sunshine and showers, than around our own mountains and valleys. This is no proof, however, that Providence is not the government of Christ there; nor that God would thus spare and prosper "Babylon," if Christ did not reign, and "must reign until all enemies are put under His feet." God is providential everywhere, because Christ is "appointed HEIR over all things." Accordingly, when the mediatorial reign of Christ over the world shall finish, and He shall "give up the kingdom to the Father," the Father will neither watch over, nor work at all for the world; nor yet continue it in being, but burn up the earth and all that it contains. "The thrones will be set for judgment," when Christ vacates the throne of grace. The Father condescended to become providential on earth, because the Son undertook redemption; but the moment the Son ceases to save, the Father will cease to superintend or spare. The close of Christ's *kingship*, will be the end of all providence on earth.

If you have never weighed this view of providence before, take it at once to "the balance of the sanctuary." What saith the Scriptures? "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son." "He hath given Him power over all flesh." "He hath made Him head over all things to the church, and put all

things in subjection to Him." Accordingly, the Saviour says expressly, "All power in heaven and earth is Mine." "I have the keys of hell and death." Thus

> "The worlds of nature and of grace,
> Are put beneath His sway."

This was such a cardinal and favourite article of primitive faith, that Paul actually had to interfere at Corinth, in order to prevent Christians from supposing that the Father was in *subjection* to the Son! 1 Cor. xv. 27. But, who needs this *caution* now? We need, alas, to be cautioned against ascribing providence *more* to the Father than to the Son, for, apart from the Son, He is no more the God of providence, than He is the God of grace and salvation.

In a word, whatever God is to man,—ay, or to the universe itself,—it is all in and by Christ.

It may require some time, and thought too, to run your ordinary views of providence into this apostolic channel; and some pains to keep them from running back into the old *ruts* of popular opinion; but the effort will amply repay all your labour; because it will keep you faithful to the Son, as the only security for the Father's blessing upon your temporal affairs.

Mediatorial providence is thus a more sublime and solemn thing, than popular providence, as it reigns, in order to extend the mediatorial kingdom on earth. A further exposition in a more popular form of the doctrine of Divine providence, will appear in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE VISION OF ELIPHAZ; OR, DIVINE PROVIDENCE VINDICATED.

"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"—ABRAHAM.

"Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a Spirit passed before my face; and the hair of my flesh stood up; it stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof; an image was before mine eyes. There was silence, and I heard a voice saying, 'Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?'"—JOB iv. 12—17.

THIS is no idle tale, nor superstitious legend, but the unvarnished narrative of an actual vision, told by one who was not likely to be deceived, and still less to deceive others. Indeed, it has the very air of truth about it, and commands credence from having, unlike other ghost stories, a moral and a purpose, worthy of such supernatural interposition. The time of it, too, renders it a very natural way of teaching men the character of God, and of the Divine government. According to the most accurate calculations, Eliphaz lived at least a hundred years before Abraham; consequently, before there was any written revelation of the Divine will, for that began with Moses five hundred years afterwards. It was therefore to be expected, that in the absence of the Scriptures, God would employ some substitute, which should have the authority of an oracle, and compensate by its solemnity, for the

brevity of its appeals. Such was the Temanitic vision; and what could be more solemn or suitable, than the visit of a spirit from the invisible world, to vindicate the character and government of God in this world? For if now, when the canon of Scripture is complete, men stagger at the apparent inequalities of Providence, and still suspect that the ways of God are not equal, who can wonder that such visions were necessary in a dark and idolatrous age? Except a few old men who had retained God in their knowledge, Eliphaz stood alone in Teman. The direct posterity of Noah had abandoned the God of their fathers, and He seemed, to punish this defection, to have abandoned them. Idolatry and vice were becoming rampant throughout the East, and the few righteous men in it, were alternately the prey of the Chaldeans and Sabeans. All this Eliphaz saw and felt, until his faith in providence was rudely shaken. He began to think that the world might be better managed, more equally divided than it was, and virtue and vice rewarded accordingly. Methinks I see him walking in the fields of Teman, lonely and sad, and musing on the diversified scene of human affairs and Divine Providence. I hear him reasoning thus: "Why all this darkness and disorder, if a God of light and wisdom manage the world? Why all this suffering and misery, if a God of love sit at the helm of the universe? Could things be worse if there were no Providence? I would not allow the wicked to prosper, nor leave the righteous to suffer, if their lots were at my disposal." Imagine Eliphaz reasoning thus rashly, and now follow him to his chamber while in this temper. Weary of conjecture, he throws himself on his bed, wishing and hoping to forget in the arms of sleep, the pain of his waking thoughts. But all

in vain; sleep flies from him, and as he tosses restlessly upon his couch, haunted with his perplexities, he sees in the uncertain light of his flickering lamp, his door slowly opening, and a dim, vague apparition gliding into the room in awful and ominous majesty. How his blood freezes in his trembling veins, and the cold sweat bursts from every pore. "There was silence!" Every moment of that awful pause would seem an age. But, when nature could sustain the racking suspense no longer, the unearthly voice of his mysterious visitor pronounced his Divine message, "Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?"

What a lesson, and reproof! Surely, Eliphaz will never dare after this vision, to censure or suspect the Divine administration; for if men die without wisdom, and angels are chargeable with folly, who is fit to manage the world but the God who created it? In this connection we feel instinctively that Eliphaz ought never to question the equity of God again; nor after such a solemn rebuke, to murmur under any dispensation of Providence, however severe or mysterious.

And if in the presence of such a Spirit, we should feel bound to acknowledge that the Judge of all the earth does right, why not make the acknowledgment in the presence of that Spirit's testimony? For the truth of the Divine maxim remains the same now, as when it thrilled through the heart of Eliphaz in the silence of midnight.

"And who questions the truth of it?" it may be said. Many. Those do so who murmur under the trying providences which overwhelm them. Those do so who think they are unfairly treated when their plans and prospects are blasted by calamity.

Those do so who consider their lot in life as an excuse for neglecting the great salvation. And there are many who thus fly in the face of Providence, and say practically, "that the ways of the Lord are not equal." Indeed, we are all in danger of charging God rashly, whenever His mighty hand presses heavily upon our worldly affairs. It is, therefore, of immense importance for every one to have his mind so stored and established with the grand principles of the Divine government, that he shall be prepared both to expect tribulation, and to bear calamity. Now, whatever inequalities *are*, or *appear* to be, in the allotments of Providence, they neither would nor could be removed by any human management of the world. For "shall mortal man be *more* just than God?" or rather, would he be *equally* just? We know how we *are* under the present system of Providence; but how we *might* be if that management were to change hands, we do *not* know. Judging, however, from facts, we can hardly fail to perceive that the less we are in the power of man the better. We have always smarted when we have signed away our independence to others, and found that absolute power was *sure* to be abused. Now, if the little control which others can acquire over us be so irksome and injurious, what would be the consequence if we were entirely at the disposal of one, or a few, of our fellow-creatures? In that case would the sum of human misery be less than it now is? Would the success of our plans be more certain? Would our own lives or the life of those most dear to us be less precarious? Would there be more comfort or less risk in any department of life? All experience answers *No!* and confirms the fact that the more unshackled power is delegated *to*, or assumed by, any man, the more misery prevails.

When the Cæsars were masters of the world, the world was in slavery. Whatever inconvenience may, therefore, arise from Providence, as it is now conducted by God, it is evidently far less than if it were conducted by man; for, "could great men thunder as Jove himself does, they would never be quiet." In this point of view, we should be immense losers by every iota of power which God resigned into other hands. Whenever, therefore, we are tempted to repine under our crosses and calamities, let us pause, and imagine what would be the natural and inevitable consequence, were God to withdraw from the government of the moral world, and to leave us in the capricious grasp of human power.

For "shall mortal man be *more* just than God? Man is naturally un*just* to his species, whenever the line of equity crosses the line of his own interests and inclinations; whereas the motives to selfishness, partiality, caprice, and injustice, can have no influence whatever upon the Eternal Mind, because God can never have any *end* to answer by undue rigour or indirect means. Everything of the kind must be equally foreign and abhorrent to the nature of a perfect Being. We may, therefore, rest assured, even under the heaviest calamities, that they are always the least of two evils, or conducive to the best end.

It will strengthen and confirm this reasoning to remember that all the trying dispensations of Providence, have their direct and chief bearing upon the soul and eternity; and therefore must not be judged of as they affect our *present* happiness. What is very bad for the body, may be very good for the soul. What darkens time to us, may brighten eternity. What utterly deranges "our earthly house of this tabernacle," may prepare us for "the house

not made with hands." The wind that withers our gourds of earthly happiness, may shake down a perfect shower of ripe fruit and healing leaves from the tree of life. The stroke that removes lover and friend far from us, may bring nearer than ever the presence of the Saviour, and the witness of the Spirit. God's object in all His dealings with His children is to make them "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," by conforming them to the image of His Son; and, therefore, if that conformity is going on by any means, it is a more unequivocal token of His love, than the increase or continuance of any earthly good whatever.

For the present we must content ourselves with the Divine assurance, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter," and await with confidence the disclosures of that day of final recompense, when earth and heaven shall unite to swell the chorus of the song of Moses and the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD.

"In this one word are contained all the treasures of Divine goodness. But, although God suffers us long, He does not let us alone. He forbears to destroy; but not to punish."—JEREMY TAYLOR.

"Long-suffering is a form of CHESED—mercy; for wherever God is said to be so, He is represented as gracious and merciful."—CABAL. LEXICOG.

THAT God is long-suffering, or very patient, and thus "*slow* to anger," can neither be denied nor doubted, by any one who believes that God hates sin. God, however, hates "putting away," or punishing, also and equally; and, therefore, He is both "slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy;" or "not willing that any should perish; but that all should come to repentance."

The whole history of the world proves this fact. Every generation of mankind is a monument of it, and the present generation a living illustration of it. But, alas, the generality are as insensible of being monuments of Divine patience, as the pyramids of Egypt, or the statues of Greece and Rome, are unconscious of being the memorials of the dead, or the landmarks of time! How few see either marvel or mystery in the long-suffering of God towards themselves or others! How seldom and slightly we wonder, that we are not "cut down" as cumberers of the ground!

It is not thus, that the patience of God is thought of in heaven. Its reign on earth, is a *mystery* in heaven, to

the martyrs. "The souls, under the altar, of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony they held, cry with a loud voice, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Rev. vi. 9, 10. This is not said in the spirit of either revenge or unholy impatience; but because both the holiness and truth of God seem to require such a vindication of the martyrs on earth;—most of whom had been deemed either fools or fanatics, by the judges who condemned them, and by the crowds that shouted at their death. The martyrs themselves knew that they died "for Christ's sake and the Gospel," intelligently and deliberately; and that, until their memory had credit on earth for this, their influence as witnesses for the truth would not be great; and hence, they long to be avenged. Besides, it is not "the vengeance of eternal fire" they invoke; but such retribution "on earth," as should vindicate their "innocent blood," and their holy cause; and thus *further* the Gospel in the world.

But not amongst the spirits under the heavenly altar only, was the patience of God wondered at. The very heathen that shed the blood of the saints then, wondered at the patience of their own gods, when the thunderbolts of Olympus slept over traitors and tyrants. The delay of deserved judgments gave rise to the Greek proverb, "the mills of the gods grind slowly." The Jews also, even in their worst state, or whilst "despising the riches of the goodness and forbearance of God," as displayed in the Gospel, yet kept up the old Rabbinical proverb, that "Michael, the angel of judgment, flies with but *one* wing; and Gabriel, the angel of mercy, with *two* wings." This proverb is current amongst the Jews still.

These hints throw some light upon the Divine patience;

but if you have never wondered at it in your *own* case, nor regarded the generality of mankind as monuments of it, you do not understand it yet; for, even in your case,—young as you are, the long-suffering of God cannot be accounted for, but on and by the principles of the great salvation itself. I mean not *apart* from the atonement and intercession of the Lamb slain.

There are only *two* classes of principles in the Divine government according to which God exercises any of His *moral* perfections. All His conduct is regulated, either by the principles of the eternal law, or by those of the everlasting Gospel. But law itself, as it provides no mercy for a sinner, so it admits no *respite* of punishment, by its own provision. Accordingly, when Satan and his angels threw off their allegiance to God and law, no patience was exercised towards them. The moment these angelic fig-trees became barren in the heavenly vineyard, they were both *cut* down, and *cast* down into hell. "The wind passed over them, and they were *gone*, and their place knew them no more!" They "fell like lightning from the skies" of glory. Why? because law knows no mercy, and exercises no forbearance; and for them, there was no Gospel, because no mediator. Adam and Eve were not treated thus, when they fell, although they had believed the devil rather than God, and even in contradiction of God. Why? for this was the very *climax* of rebellion! They too, however, must have died "on the day" they sinned, had law only, been applied, and taken its course, in their case. But Adam was spared 930 years on earth. Why? because the principles of the GOSPEL were applied to his case. He was allowed to live, and to hope too, because a Mediator interposed between God and man, pledged both to atone and intercede. Thus it was upon the Lamb, *to*

be slain, that patience began to lean, when man became a sinner. Law stood back, and kept silence, because the eternal Son stood forward as our Advocate, saying, "Deliver from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom." And thus still, the "long-suffering of God," leans upon the priesthood of Christ. We live, because Christ died for us once, and now "ever liveth to intercede for us." For, were He to lay down the intercessory censer "within the veil," "death, followed by hell," would at once make the whole earth one grave.

This intimate and inseparable connection between the mediation of Christ and the patience of God, detracts nothing from the spirit or the spontaneity of that patience. The Son does not *hold* back the Father from making "short work" with the guilty. No, indeed! the Son is "the express image," and appointed *impersonation* of both the loving-kindness and long-suffering of the Father, towards rebellious children. It is because God is essentially "slow to anger," whenever forbearance can do any *good*, that He made Christ "a priest for ever," and that by "an oath." For, had not God been patience as well as "love," justice would have sealed the world's doom, *before* a Mediator could have interfered.

Nor should this strictness of both law and justice, be deemed *stern*, by you. It is against SIN, that they are thus unbending and burning; and sin, remember, is a *disposition*, as well as rebellion against God; and thus, an utter *disqualification* for either enjoying or serving God in heaven, or on earth, even if God could wink at enmity to Himself.

You ought now, to be quite prepared, brief as these hints are, for giving due, and thus deep heed, to the solemn fact, that Divine patience is the long-suffering of an OMNISCIENT God.

The God of patience, is a God of infinite knowledge. Did He know as little of us as we know of each other; or were our personal and family secrets, *secret* to Him, His long-suffering would be less wonderful. But He who spares us, *knows* us: all things are naked and open to Him who lengthens out our life and privileges. He marked every sin, and He remembers every sin. Our own conscience is not such a record or accuser as His omniscience. That penetrating eye saw through all our excuses and pretences, even when we were trying to hide their hollowness from ourselves and others!

It is the long-suffering of a HOLY God. He who saw all our sins, *hated* them all. He felt offended, dishonoured, and insulted by each of them. Each of them was the abomination of His whole soul. For *any* of them, His justice might have struck us down; His wrath consumed us; His equity abandoned us; yea, His goodness might have given us up! For every sin was a farther breach of His law; a farther departure from His image; a farther robbery of His glory; a farther abuse of His mercy; a farther outrage against the strength of His authority, and the strivings of His Spirit. I envy not, I tremble for the conscience which can read all this unmoved and unmelted. And I pity the understanding which does not see, that patience towards such sinners, by such a holy God, must and can rest upon no other foundation than the atonement which saves from sin.

It is the long-suffering of an OMNIPOTENT God! The patience of the *weak*, under insult and provocation, is the mere virtue of necessity. They cannot punish effectually, even if they were to try. And even when they can avenge themselves, they have to weigh future consequences, and to take care that they themselves are not sufferers or losers by retaliation.

It is not so with God. He has nothing to fear, nothing to lose, by avenging Himself of His adversaries. He does not spare, because He is unable or afraid to cut down. No! He could have palsied the tongue for the first lie; paralysed the hand for the first touch of forbidden fruit; lamed the feet for the first step in the ways of sin; upset reason for its first unbelief; seared conscience for its first treachery; and sunk the soul for its first rebellion!

God does not, indeed, act in this summary manner. But why? Sin deserves it; and justice would warrant it! There is only one explanation of the Divine forbearance,—Christ died to atone, and lives to intercede for us!

I cannot forget that these views of the evil and desert of *single acts* of sin, will be doubted, if not denied by some. But still, I must not allow myself to be diverted from my subject, by reasoning out the *justice* of the matter. I must, at present, settle it at a stroke. Take, then, any *single* act of sin in your own life: you did not *love* God when you committed it; you forgot, or banished God from your thoughts at the time; you disliked to think of Him. Thus the single act was the expression of your *whole disposition* at the moment.

This is not *true* of you now, if you be, indeed, redeemed from the love of sin, and "reconciled to God by the blood of the Lamb." Single sins are still "exceeding sinful" in themselves in your case; but they are not the expression of either your real or entire character, nor the true index to your heart. You are not *glad* to find, much less to create, opportunities of sinning, or neglecting God. You dread temptation, as well as pray against it. But *this* is not the state of either the heart or the conscience of the unconverted. They are most in their element when they can *forget God.* And yet He does not forget them, nor soon

cease to "strive" with them, by His Spirit and providence! This is wonderful forbearance.

The long-suffering of God can, however, be satisfactorily and gloriously accounted for, by the principles and purposes of SALVATION, although by nothing else. For the great principle of salvation is, perfect satisfaction to both law and justice, by the sacrifice of Christ! Now, a sacrifice that accounts for the reign of free grace and rich mercy, may well explain and justify the exercise of patience, however far or long it may run; for if the mighty and meritorious atonement of the cross renders God *just* in pardoning the guilty, so it does in sparing them.

Weigh this fact. The atonement was such a tribute to the Divine glory, and thus such an honour to the Divine government, that it enables justice to warrant, and holiness to welcome, the "goings forth" of mercy with open arms, and full hands, and smiling looks, and a yearning heart, and "a still small voice," to beseech the world to be reconciled unto God; and, therefore, it well accounts for long-suffering, even when longest and most undeserved. But whilst this clears up the mystery of Divine patience, it is no excuse for presuming on, or trying that patience; neither ought it to lessen at all our admiration of God, as "the God of patience." It ought, indeed, to *increase* our admiration of His forbearance a thousand-fold; for He has more to do and endure, owing to the very glory of the atonement, upon the basis of which He acts. I mean, that long-suffering under LAW would not be half so wonderful as long-suffering under the Gospel. Accordingly, whenever you wonder at the patience of God in your own case, it is not so much because you have broken His law, as because you have abused or trifled with His grace. So, also,

you never find it so difficult to hope in His mercy for pardon, as when you feel that you have been taking unholy liberties with Christ crucified, at the mercy-seat! Transgressions of the law, and even sins against light or conscience, may, and ought to lie heavy upon our spirits; but not so heavy as perversions or neglect of the glorious Gospel. These, indeed, are not reasons for despair, nor even for doubt; but they are weighty reasons for deep shame and bitter lamentation before God, and before the Saviour too.

This now, is just the time for reminding you of the patience of the SAVIOUR Himself towards both the world and the church, and thus towards yourself. The only writer on this subject, that I remember, from early life, is the great and good *John Flavel*, of Dartmouth. He says, in his treatise, "on England's Duty," in 1689, "The patience of the glorified saints in heaven is *nothing* to that of Christ towards provoking sinners on earth. The souls under the altar are less able to bear the slow pace of justice towards their enemies, than Christ was. Theirs was not *sinful* impatience; but yet a patience short of Christ's. And yet, however patient He hath been, there will be an *end* of its day; a time, when even He will wait no longer. He now standeth at the door of the heart knocking; but there is a knock that will be the *last* knock; an unknown hour, when the Master of the house will *shut* the door of the house! The day of Christ's patience towards Jerusalem was a long day; but it had an end, and it ended in their destruction. O, try the patience of Christ no longer, I beseech you,—forasmuch as you see every day His patience ending with *others;* long-suffering coming down, and justice ascending the stage,—beware of *provoking* Him! 'Kiss the Son, lest He be angry.'"

These are not needless remonstrances, or appeals. The Saviour is, indeed, patient, even to a proverb; but not so, as to place either the barren or the disobedient *out* of danger, in God's vineyard. "Spare it another year," is His prayer for many a fruitless fig-tree; but ever and anon some of them *are* cut down when they least expect it! Accordingly, how many of your contemporaries are no more! "Watch, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh." Already, you have weighty reasons for both wondering at and adoring His patience, in your *own* case! If you feel this, the feeling will neither be deadened nor weakened, by remembering the ordinary spirit of the Saviour's patience, as it was displayed in bearing with the faults and mistakes of His apostles. I should despair for myself, were He not as long-suffering *now*, as then. I do not *shut* my heart to His warnings; but it would either harden or sink, were I not allowed to look into His heart, and to *open* my own to the proofs I see in His, that "a bruised reed He will not break, nor quench the smoking flax." Christians need to be borne with, as Peter, James, and John were. Yes, and so they are borne with, if, like them, their hearts and habits are, upon the whole, "right with God." It is the *perverse*, and not the imperfect, that weary out His patience.

There are many minds strongly prone to take up with a few gentle and familiar ideas of God, which create no awe, and occasion no uneasiness, and thus produce neither holiness nor humility; and hence they dream of no danger in "playing fast and loose" with the Gospel; and deem it no presumption to take for granted that a God so good, is too good to be either severe or strict. Accordingly, they get no good from the Gospel, and never become better by it

whilst this spirit lasts, or whilst God is not feared by them. Now, it is to break up this dead calm and delusive dream, that God proclaims His own eternity, and thus all the awful as well as lovely glories of His infinite nature.

Awake to this fact! The God with whom we have to do is the eternal God, as well as the God of love, holiness, and justice. There is no such God as the world talks about, and dreams about! The Lord our God is holy, and therefore, hates sin, and despises a form of religion, without the power of godliness. He is "the great and terrible Jehovah;" and, therefore, although "rich in mercy" to the humble, He abhors both the proud and the presumptuous, and unfolds His eternity and infinity to awe them! Such is the God of our fathers; a FATHER to all who fear Him and hope in His mercy; but "a consuming fire" to all who do not. "Young men and maidens, praise ye the Lord," as Moses and Miriam did at the Red Sea, singing, "He is my father's God, and I will exalt Him!" Descendants of the PURITANS, remember your ancestry, and how they felt this endearing relationship to God! They identified themselves with all "the dead in Christ," as their fathers, and caught from the whole family in heaven and earth the spirit of filial fear and love. Hence, they hated alike, "vain philosophy," and the vainer traditions of priestcraft. They knew that "the *noble* army of martyrs" died for the testimony of Jesus, and not for the *ignoble* pretensions of the hierarchy; for the word of God, and not for the commandments of men. "Know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve Him," as they did, in spirit and in truth!

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